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SANKARADEVA—A *STUDY*

SANKARDEVA—A STUDY

BY

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ASSAM SHOOL SERVICE

*(Author of the Mahapurusa, Panchateertha, Srikrishna, Srihetra,
Jannastami, Chaturbarga, Sahitya Twatta, Rational Grammar,
Composition, Translation, Readers etc.)*

GAUHATI

(ASSAM)

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PREFACE

The following pages are an humble attempt to recount the life and teachings of saint Sankaradeva the great Vaisnavite reformer of Assam. Sankaradeva's influence has been felt from the long past to the present time and his rapturous songs, hymns and doctrines have been resounding throughout the length and breadth of the land of Assam. Sankaradeva is the founder of the Assam Vaisnavite cult embodied in the form of the Eka-Sarana Bhāgavati Dharma, being devotion only to one Absolute God, the Primal Cause of all, without any caste superstition. The present treatise contains copious quotations from his Puthis, songs, hymns, sayings and teachings. Here, in brief, his life-sketch, works and teachings culminating in social literary, national and religious culture have been illustrated.

The composition of these pages has a story behind it. These pages were in the form of an article entitled "The place of Sankaradeva in the Assamese Literature". This article was prepared to read in the Assamese Sub-section of the Eleventh Session of All India Oriental Conference held at Hyderabad (Deccan) under the presidency of Ghulam Yazdani, Esq., M.A., O.B.F., Director of Archaeology, H. E. H. The Nizam Government, from the 21st December to the 24th December, 1941. This Assamese Sub-section has been opened for the first time with the Section of the "Non-Local Indian Languages", and it was held in the College premises of the Osmania University, under the presidency of Dr. Baburam Seksena, M.A., D.Litt ;

Reader, Allahabad University, on the 22nd December 1941. The opening of this Assamese Section owes much to the noble activities of the Kāmarupa Anusandhan Samiti (the Assam Research Society) Gauhati, during the regime of office by Prof. D. Goswami, M.A., B.L., as Hony. Secretary and Sj. S. Kataki L.T., as Hony. Assistant Secretary. We owe much to Sj. S. Kataki's enterprise for the opening of this Section.

In this Assamese Sub-section the following articles were presented and their synopsis were read and accepted :

- (1) "The Progressive Study of the Assamese Language from 1826 to 1941" by Sj. S. Kataki, L.T.
- (2) "The Ramayana in Poetry and Songs" by Prof. U. C. Lekharu, M.A., B.L.
- (3) "The Yavana and its various Interpretations" by Jamider Sj. N. N. Choudhury.
- (4) "The Muslim Contribution Towards the Assamese Literature" by Maulavi Muhammad Saleh, B.A., B.T.
- (5) "The place of Sankaradeva in the Assamese Literature" by Sj. H. M. Das, B.A., L.T.

This article "The place of Sankaradeva in the Assamese Literature" has been developed to the present shape and forms under the title of "Sankaradeva, a Study."

A detailed account of the material utilised in compiling these pages,* has been given in the Bibliography. The Bibliography has been profusely utilised, nay, even some exalted lines and passages have been quoted from some of them here and there. Hence it is my humble and pleasant duty to acknowledge sincere indebtedness to the

authors, publishers and editors of those works mentioned in the Bibliography.

The incentive of developing and enlarging the article "The place of Sankaradeva in the Assamese Literature" came from Dr. B. Kakati, M.A., Ph.D., Profesor, Cotton College, Gauhati, who helped me with all possible suggestions going through the manuscript ; even the title "Sankaradeva, a Study" has been suggested by him ; for which act I am ever grateful to Dr. Kakati.

Secondly I am greatly indebted to Sj. Chandra Nath Bora, M.A., B.L., Professor, Cotton College, Gauhati, who took great pains in revising the maruscript through and through making constructive suggestion for its betterment and without whose resourceful, ungrudging and untiring help it would not have been possible to bring out this treatise.

Thirdly I feel it a great pleasure to offer my humble thanks to Professors Dr. M. N. Goswami, M.A., Ph.D., Sj. B. K. Barua, M.A., B.L., Sj. U. K. Goswami, M.A., B.L. of the Cotton Collegé ; Sj. K. R. Medhi, M.A., Late S. C. Goswami, B.A., B.T., I.S.O., Rai Bahadur Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, M.A., B.L., Ph.D. of Gauhati and Sj. B. Goswami and Sj. S. M. Das, M.A., B.T. of Cotton Collegiate School, Gauhati, for their help and suggestions in manifold ways.

Further I owe much to the following persons for helping me in procuring the illustrations as stated below :—

- (1) Prof. Sj. B. K. Barua, M.A., B.L. for an illustration of one of the scenes of the Kaliadaman as presented in the old puthi form of the Bhāgavata Purāna.
- (2) The family of Late J. N. Barooah, M.A., B.L. (Retired Judge), Gauhati, for their kind consent

in my obtaining a photo of their family "throne" with all its appendages in which act much assistance was afforded by Sj. Madhava Chandra Mahanta of Sualkuchi.

- (3) Sj. Kumudeswar Goswami, Gauhati, for his kind permission in allowing me to have a photo of his "Sarai" (Brass tray).

Gauhati, }
1945

AUTHOR.

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of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar, Rangpur, Borga, Mymensing, Dacca, Tippera, a part of Pabnā and also probably a part of east Nepāl". (Early History of Kāmarupa, p. 2).

Prāgjyotishpur was the capital of Prāgjyotisha kingdom. This Prāgjyotishpur is in the land of modern town of Gauhati. Mr. Gait in his history of Assam says that "Prāgjyotishpur means the city of Eastern Astrology". In the Kalikā purāna it is stated that "Here Brahmā first created the stars and hence the city is called Prāgjyotishpur—a city equal to the city of Indra". This can be sustained by the very existence of Navagraha or nine planets at the top of the hill called Chitrāchala within the land of modern Gauhati on its eastern side.

Kāmarupa.—Prāgjyotisha, the ancient name of the land of Assam, assumed the name of Kāmarupa later on during the reign of King Bhagadatta. According to the Purānas the name of Kāmarupa has a legend behind it. In the long past, Kāmadeva the god of love—the Indian Cupid—enraged god Siva and consequently he had been burnt into ashes, whereupon Kāmadeva's consort being mortified, propitiated god Siva with all her heart and soul. Siva being pleased granted her a boon by which Kāmadeva resumed his former form. After

this event Prāgjyotisha has been transformed to Kāmarupa.

Later on, in the Yoginitantra it is said—

करतोयां समाश्रित्य यावद्विकर त्रासिनी ।
 उत्तरस्यां कञ्जगिरिः करतोयातु पश्चिमे ॥
 तीर्थं श्रेष्ठादिक्षु नदी पूर्वस्यां गिरिकन्यके ।
 दक्षिणे ब्रह्मपुत्रस्य लाक्षायां सङ्गमावधि ॥
 कामरूप इति ख्यातः सर्वशास्त्रेषु निश्चितः ॥

The country, bounded on the north by Kanja-giri, on the south by the confluence of the Brahmaputra and Lākshya, on the east by the sacred river Dikshu and on the west by the Karotoyā, is ascertained to be the kingdom of Kāmarupa in all scriptures. The name of its capital remained the same as Prāgjyotishpur—modern town of Gauhati.

RULERS OF KĀMARUPA.

Narakāśura.—He was the first Hindu ruler of Kāmarupa. He was born of the earth by god Vishnu in his boar incarnation. He was a veteran worshipper of goddess Kāmākhyā adorned as one of the Saktipithas of India which is situated at the centre of Kāmarupa. Propitiating goddess Kāmākhyā he acquired marvellous and wonderful

powers and at last being irrevent he was apt to misuse his powers indiscriminately. This ill news runs apace and reaches the ear of Sri Krishna at Dwarakā who was compelled to come and kill him to keep the prestige of goddess Kāmākhyā.

Bhagadatta.—He was the eldest son of Narakāsura. He ascended the throne after his father and became a mighty king of Prāgjyotishpur. Durjyodhana the son of Dhritarastra, is said to have married his daughter Bhānumati. In valour as a warrior Bhagadatta was not “inferior to Indra”. He played an important part in the Kurukshetra war joining “the confederacy headed by Durjyodhana”. He was killed by Arjuna.

Bāna.—He was the king of Sonitpur—modern Tezpur in the district of Darrang. He was one of the fast friends of Narakāsura. He worshipped Siva in the temple of Mahābhairaba. His daughter Ushā Devi married Anirudha the grandson of Sri Krishna.

Bhismaka.—He, a friend of Bāna, ruled over the eastern-most part of the province known as Koundilya (Bidarbha) near modern Sadiya. He worshipped goddess Chandikā in the temple of Tamreswari. His daughter Rukmini married Sri Krishna.

Sriharsha.—Thus the kingdom of Kāmarupa is associated with the names of world renowned celebrities from time immemorial. After these illustrious kings and rulers, Kāmarupa was ruled by some other eminent rulers. Sriharsha was one of these kings. He extended his kingdom to Kalinga—modern Orissa.

Bhāskarvarmā.—He being one of the mighty kings of Kāmarupa extended his kingdom to Behar. He was a renowned king. He attended the All India Social and Religious Conference held by Siladitya in Northern India. Hiuen Tsang the Chinese pilgrim also attended that great conference. Being acquainted with Bhāskarvarmā he came to Kāmarupa and recorded valuable notes on the kingdom ruled by Bhāskarvarmā.

Other Dynasties.—After king Bhāskarvarmā, the dynasties of Jitary, Paul, Bārabhuyan, Khen, Kalitā, Kachāri, Chutia, and some other races and tribes reigned over different territories of Kāmarupa; of these the Jitary dynasty had their capital at Jalpaiguri and the Khen dynasty had their capital at Kamatāpura in modern Bengal and others in different cities of Assam Valley and some part of Surama Valley.

KochKings.—With the end of the Jitary and the Khena dynasties the rulers of Kāmarupa got

involved in civil disputes, as a result of which any and every one could proclaim himself as a ruler. In no time a mighty person named Hajo, belonging to Koch clan managed to be chief leader of a tribe and ruled over in some part of western Kāmarupa with his capital at Chiknā near modern Dhubri. A powerful Koch king named Vishwasingha extended his kingdom towards the north-west and removed his capital to Kooch-Bihar where he ruled over more than twenty five years and died in 1540; leaving his sons Malladeva and Sukladdhaja as his heirs. Malla ascended the throne assuming the name Naranarayana and his brother Sukladdhaja vested as Dewan assuming the name Chilārai.

Ahoms—At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Ahoms from Upper Barmā belonging to the Tai dynasty ruled over the eastern-most part of the land. The territories under their administration were known as Ahom kingdom and their capital was at Gargaon later on at Rangpur in the modern district of Sibsagar. The name of their kingdom Ahom has been later on transformed into Assam. The first Ahom king was Chukapha who ascended the throne of the Ahom kingdom in 1229 A.D.

Naranārayana—In course of time Naranārayana the Koch king rose to power and invaded

the Ahom kingdom in 1547 and reigned over the territories between the rivers of the Barnadi and Karatoyā. After annexing a part of the Ahom kingdom he settled all the disputes in his kingdom with the help of his brother Chilārai Dewan. He rebuilt the temple of Kāmākshya after its demolition by Kalapahar in 1553. He maintained a galaxy of pandits and scholars in his court. Among the scholars of his court Sankaradeva was the foremost.

THE COURT OF KING NARANĀRĀYANA

Literary ideals—King Naranārāyana was a great scholar and a true lover of learning. His political ideals were tinged with cultural idealism. His patriotism flowed mainly in the channel of cultural pursuits. He believed that literature is the only means to attain cultural achievement. Hence he tried his utmost to urge literary awakening in his kingdom. While he was learning Sanskrit at Benares in his early life he was astonished and surprised to intimate himself with the vast lore of Sanskrit literature. So he made up his mind to enrich his mother tongue with the help of the extensive hoard in Sanskrit. This idea of his early life urged him to think on the line for literary pursuits.

Literary council—He made Kooch-Béhar the seat of all cultural activities of Kāmarupa. He formed something like a literary council attached to the royal court. Scholars and pandits available from all quarters in or about were invited to join this learned assembly. A well thought scheme was drawn up to carry on works of the assembly. Division of work had been made according to the

ability and capacity of the scholars individually and collectively. Some were set to original thinking ; some in research works ; some in rendering Assamese version of Sanskrit scriptures and some in collecting folk lore and so on. The following few lines give an idea of distribution of works :

शुनियोक पुरुषोत्तम भट्टाचार्य्य द्विज ।
 करियोक रत्नमाला व्याकरण बीज ॥
 शुनियोक आज्ञा मोर राम सपस्वती ।
 भारतर पद तुमि करियो सम्प्रति ॥
 आरू आछे सप्तकाण्ड रामायण यत ।
 श्लोकक भाङ्गिया पद करियो साम्प्रत ॥
 अष्टादश पुराणर करियोक पद ।
 ताके शुनि नरलोक पाइवे परम पद ॥
 शुनियो शङ्कर तुमि महाभक्त जन ।
 वाढ्य स्कन्धर पद करा निवन्धन ॥
 हरि भक्तिक तुमि करियो प्रचार ।
 हरि भजि नरे हौक संसारर पार ॥
 शुनियो श्रीधर तुमि मोर बाक्यधर ।
 ज्योतिषक भाङ्गि तुमि साध्य खण्ड करा ॥

(Darrang Raj Bhasavali)

“Let Brahman Purusottama Bhattācharyya compose Ratnamala Vyākaraṇa. Let Rāmsaraswati translate the Mahābhārata, the entire Rāmāyana and eighteen Purāṇas so that people may attain the supreme object of life. Let Sankara, the great devotee compose verses of the entire Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and thereby, preaching the Bhakti cult so that people may save themselves by worshipping Lord Hari. Let Sridhara make verses of Jyotiṣa”.

Thus books on various branches of knowledge such as Literature, Grammar, Astronomy, Mathematics, and general topics bearing on social, moral, political and religious interests, have been written, composed, compiled, edited and translated.

Literary growth—The growth of literary pursuits in Kāmarupa rose to its zenith in the period beginning from the latter part of the 15th century to the end of the 16th century during the reign of king Naranārāyana. This literary growth owes much to the all possible Royal help and facility afforded to the assembly comprising of several eminent litterateurs such as Purusottama Vidya-vāgiṣa, Rāmasaraswati, Sankaradeva, Sridhara, Mādhavadeva, Sarbānanda Bhattācharyya, Vakula and others. Sankaradeva the great Neo-Vaiṣṇavite reformers was the central figure of this learned

assembly and from him radiated inspiration to all litterateurs.

An English traveller named Ralph Fitch visited Kāmarupa and reached the Koch Capital at Kooch-Bihar during the reign of king Naranārāyana and recorded the following note :

“The king and his subjects were all Hindus. By this time, under the benign auspices of Naranārāyana the new Vaishnavite tenet of Sankaradeva had been propagated so wide that the people aversed to the killing of animals.”

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SANKARADEVĀ

Ancestors—There lived an illustrious Siromoni Bhuyan Chandibara a Kayastha by caste in Kāmarupa during the reign of Durlabha Narāyana the king of Kamatāpur. The Bhuyan family grew to be land-holders and an influential gentry in Kāmarupa assuming the name of Bārabhuyan. In course of time Kusumbara Bhuyan, the great grandson of Chandibara Bhuyan, happened to be chief of the Bhuyans while Vishwa Singha ruled over Kāmarupa. Vishwa Singha tried to extirpate the Bhuyans from his kingdom, so Kusumbara Bhuyan migrated to Alipukhuri in the site of Baradowa in the modern district of Nowgong which lay within the territories of Ahom Kings. Kusumbara settled at Alipukhuri for a pretty long time. As he had no issue for a long time he worshipped god Siva, as a result of which Kusumbara had been blessed with a male child in 1449 A.D. This male child was Sankara the great.

आश्विन प्रवेशि पञ्चदिन वहि गैल

सेहि दिना शङ्करदेवर जन्म भैल ॥

शुक्ला दशमी आसि भैल शुक्रवारे ।

धर्म कहि पाप नष्ट कैला जगतरे ॥

(Sankara charit)

“Sankaradeva was born on Friday, the tenth day of the new-moon on the fifth day of the month of Aswina”.

The future greatness of Sankara was indicated by some miraculous incidents taking place at his birth. All sorts of conches, shells, bells, and drums sounded of their own accord. All the lights before the gods and goddesses in the family residences in the village extinguished automatically. The whole atmosphere was under darkness threatened by thunder and lightening.

Childhood—On the fifth day, the family astrologer came and cast his horoscope and proclaimed that the child possessed all the marks of greatness.

गुणे नारायण सम गम्भीरे सागर ।

प्रतापे आदित्य येन धर्मे महेश्वर ॥

“In merits he is like god Nārāyana, in gravity like the ocean, in valour like god Āditya, and in virtue like god Maheswara”.

According to the Zodiacal circle, the child was named as Sankara.

Sankara's mother died after a few days of his birth and his father died after a few years, hence he was brought up by his paternal grand mother Khersuti Āi. His childhood was full of miracles. He grew supernaturally to be very strong and

handsome. None of his comrades could cope with him in strength and beauty, and as such, he was regardfully called “Dekāgiri” the chief of youths.

Strength—Regarding his strength the following few incidents may be cited :

(1) He fought with a wild bull holding it by ears and horns.

दुइ शृङ्गे दुइ कर्णे धरिलन्त तार ।

श्रान्त हैया शान्द गोट तेजिला फोकार ॥

While he fought the bull by its ears and horns, the bull being tired began to pant.

(2) He swam across the river Brahmaputra flooded to the brim in the month of Bhādra in the rainy season.

(3) He chased and caught wild deer with his bare hands.

(4) He hold up the porpoises out of water in the Brahmaputra to show them to his friends.

Beauty—Regarding his beauty Mādhavadeva has well said in the following few lines :

दरशित सुन्दर, गौर कलेवर. यैछन सुर परकाश ।

सकल सभासद, रञ्जन याकेरि, दरशने पाप विनाश ॥

विनो अङ्गभूषण, पेखि सुशोभन, गहीन गम्भीर धीर मति ।

आयत कमल, नयन वर सुन्दर, वयन चान्दनको ज्योति ॥

लीला गजमति, गमन विलोकन, वाणी मेघ गम्भीर ।

पाषण्ड मर्दन, कलिको काले, याके सम नाहि धीर ॥

“He is beautiful in look; he is bright in complexion; he is like the sun god appearing (over the horizon); he is the delighter of all the assembly; at his sight sins are absolved. He looks charming without any ornament. He is steady, grave, and sober. His elongated lotus eyes are very beautiful. His face is as lustrous as the moon. His gait is like that of an elephant. His voice is as grave as the rumbling of clouds. There are none like him in the act of chastising the villain, in the Iron Age.

Play sports—Thus Sankara was surpassing in strength and beauty alike. A person so healthy and strong and so beautiful and well developed, cannot but display his energy. Sankara also exhibited his energy through sports, amusements and merry-makings. He gave himself to all sorts of pastimes and continued his boyish reckless life till he attained the age of twelve years. His mind was so fully occupied with sportiveness that he did not care to go to school or read at home. Being alarmed at his reckless boyish temper, one day his grandmother Khersuti Āi said to him, while he was at his meal, with soft kind and suggestive words calculating to appeal to his heart—“I am with all the members of our family, proud of having so good natured a child in you. The only painful feature in you is that you are not disposed to read

and write. All your ancestors were renowned scholars. You too should keep the prestige and tradition of your forefathers. Please do, my darling”.

At school—These touching words of his grandmother appealed to him very much and he promised to attend a school. Consequently on an auspicious day he was admitted into the school conducted by the great scholar Mahendra Kandali. Sankara's charming disposition, quick memory and sharp intellect created a striking atmosphere in the school. Within an incredibly short time Sankara could prove himself to be a profound scholar, which is evinced by his composition of a hymn just after finishing the alphabet.

करतल कमल कमलदल नयन ।

भवद्व दहन गहनवन शयन ॥

नपर नपरपर सतरत गमय ।

सभय मभय भय ममहर सततय ॥

खरतर वरशर हत दशवदन ।

खगचर नगधर फनधर शयन ॥

जगद्ध मपहर भवभय तरण ।

परपद लयकर कमलज नयन ॥

“Thy palm is like the lotus. Thine eyes are like the lotus petals. Thou art the consumer of worldly

Thou art the sleeper in deep forest. Thou art omnipresent and inner soul of all. Thou constantly removest my fear and vouchsafest my safety. Thou art the wielder of large swift arrows. Thou art the destroyer of the ten headed demon. Thou art the rider of the bird Garura and the up-lifter of the mountain. Thou art the reposer on the hooded serpent (Ananta). Thou art the dispeller of worldly sins. Thou art the saviour from the earthly grief. Thou art the giver of final beatitude. Oh lotus eyed Lord ! (I pray thee).

This hymn adoring and propitiating Lord Sri Krishna kindled the idea of devotion in the heart of the teacher and the taught alike.

* Just a few days after the composition of this sloka Sankara happened to be at school after school hours. He fell there asleep while a serpent shadowed his sleeping face scorched with rays of the sun, with its extensive hood. The teacher Kandali had to pass by and was surprised to see the hood. The serpent crawled down seeing the teacher. Next day Kandali narrated this wonderful occurrence in the school and honoured Sankara with "Sankaradeva" as a surname. By virtue of his merit, intelligence and memory Sankaradeva mastered over all the Sanskrit scriptures available within a short period. After achieving all possible know-

ledge of Sanskrit lore he paid the customary fees to his teacher and thus he ended his schooling. Considering his strength, beauty and merit the proverb “Mans sana in a corpore sano” is applicable to Sankaradeva with its true sense.

Yoga practice—After schooling Sankaradeva practised yoga and in a very short time he acquired all the mysteries of yoga process.

योग शास्त्रमत, धरि योग यत, आचरन्त दिने राति ।

Following the injunctions of yoga scriptures he practised yoga day and night. Some times he made the people astonished by his various yoga feats.

Religious aptitude—The mystery of yoga could not fully satisfy his inner aptitude. He was naturally religious and pious minded. This inborn tendency led him to study religious scriptures such as the Bhāgavata purāṇa, the Geetā, the Vedas, the Vedānta and the like and to give up yoga.

भागवत तत्त्व, जानिया पाङ्कत, एरिल्ल योग अभ्यास ।

“Realising the mystic lore of the Bhagavata purana he left off yoga practice afterwards”.

Self-realisation—The more he studied the scriptures and thought over them, the more he realised the clear vision of true religion. After

long and deep devotion and meditation he realised the true self and Bhakti cult.

हृदयर परम ईश्वर मोर गुरु । प्रभु भगवन्त भक्ततर कलतरु ॥
नमो नमो महागुरु हृषीकेश । कृष्णर चरण मने पाया उपदेश ॥

Then he proclaimed—"Oh Lord Supreme Being the redeemer of Bhaktas, the Supreme Lord of my heart, Thou art my Guru. *I pray Thee the great Guru Hrishikeshā I have realised the ever conscious Supreme Brahma through the grace of Sri Krishna."

The new light of Self realisation thus obtained led him to found a new creed with a new order and ceremonies in the form of Neo-Vaisnavite tenet with a firm belief of devotion to one God,

एक देउ, एक सेउ, एक विने नाइ केउ ।

"There is only one God ; there is only one devotion ; there are none but one."

In a nut shell this is his creed. His all pervading God is personified in the form of Sri Krishna and is adored and worshipped in heaven. His new tenet with personified God appealed to the heart of the mass people so much that they flocked together to be initiated into his new creed.

Erection of Hari mandir—Sankaradeva was so long at Ālipukhuri. In course of time Ālipukhuri

found to be too small for him to live with all relatives and friends, so he migrated to Baradowa and settled therein. Before long they built all their necessary houses, huts and sheds. One day Sankaradeva asked his family priest Rāmrām guru to erect a temple of prayer. Accordingly the work of construction of the temple of prayer began. In digging earth for filling up the floor of the temple an image of Vishnu was found. After finishing the temple work, Rāmrām guru intended to install the image in the temple. Preparation were made for installation. People of all classes were invited to attend the function. The priest began to chant injunctions of scriptures. Religious rituals and offerings were made and thrown at the feet of the image, but all the offerings with flower garlands fall upon the person of Sankaradeva. This wonderful phenomenon set all the people gaping. The people assembled exclaimed in one voice, "God is in Sankara, Sankara is in the form of God, Sankara is an incarnation of God; victory to Sankara". Most of the spectators being inspired came forward and expressed their earnest desire to be initiated to Sankaradeva's tenet.

(Sankara charit—Rām Chandra Thakur verses, 1518 to 1522).

Chihnajātra—One day at his age of nineteenth

Sankaradeva was surrounded by his relatives and disciples at Baradowa, while Burhakha, the husband of the sister of Sankaradeva's father, came and requested him to show God reposed on the throne of heaven.

आत अनन्तरे, शङ्करदेवर, उनैश वत्सर भैल ।

गृहत बसिया, आछन्त शङ्कर, बुढ़ाखाये तैके गैल ॥

* * *

सात बंकुलठर, सात गोटा नाम, पारिषदगण माने ।

चाहिवाक प्रति, सबाहाने माति, देखायो ताक यत्ने ॥

Burhakha requested him to show the seven stages of heaven with their names together with the attendants of God. Thereupon Sankaradeva said—

देखाइवो वैकुण्ठपुर ।

चिह्न नामे यात्रा करिवों विदित

हरिष पाइवा प्रचुर ॥

“I shall show you the Vaikuntha—the heaven—displaying in a drama named Chihnajātrā seeing which you will be delighted much”. Saying thus he composed the drama depicting the seat of the Lord of heaven with a throne presenting God. He painted the scene with all environments of heaven. He instructed to manufacture khols, tals, mri-dangas, bells, flutes and other necessary appliances.

He painted actors, dancers and workers and furnished them with suitable attires. He arranged everything himself for the stage.

One auspicious evening the drama of Chihna-jātrā was performed in a hall well decorated. The hall was full of audience of all classes and ranks. The performance was so skilfully and artistically displayed that all the people gathered were astonished and charmed much. They were surprised to visualise the pictorial scene of heaven with the Lord of lords, waited upon by all the fourteen attendants. All the audience uttered in one voice "Victory to Sankaradeva". Just after the end of the performance a lot of people of all ranks, castes, and creeds intended to follow the doctrine of religion propounded by Sankaradeva. As it was late at night Sankaradeva requested them to come next morning for the purpose.

Uddhava Sambad—After the dispersing of the gathering Sankaradeva at night engaged himself in composing a sacred booklet in verse containing the essence of the Bhāgavatapurāna specially of its tenth Canto. After the name of "Gopee Uddhava Sambad", in order to use it as an object of worship at the time of initiation specially of Brahmas. Next day intending Brahmins were initiated in



The Bhāgavata Purāṇ installed on a pedestal tray.

Facing Page 2.

front of this sacred booklet placed and adored on a tray.

This act of presenting the Brahmans in front of this holy book,, before imparting them sacred formulas pertaining to the tenet of Sankaradeva serves two purposes namely (1) it maintains the honour and prestige of injunctions of the Hindu scriptures (2) it gives more importance to sacred scriptures than to idols in the temple of prayer.

This ceremonial religious function made Sankaradeva's new tenet broadcast far and wide. Hearing the virtue of Sankaradeva lots of people irrespective of castes and creeds poured into his shrine to follow his creed. It has been well recorded in the following verse :—

भूया ब्राह्मण आनो नाना लोकचय ।

शरण लभिया सवे भैला भाग्योदय ॥

“Bhuyans, Brahmans and other people became blessed through initiations.”

First Marriage—At the age of twentythree Sankaradeva married a Kayastha girl named Suryavati in 1472 A.D. Leading a life of worldly man he used to preach his creed peacefully. As the days passed his wife left the world after giving birth to a female child. The bereavement

of his wife changed his mind greatly and he made up his mind to go out on a pilgrimage. His beloved daughter Manu grew up and attained marriageable age. Then she was given in marriage to a Kāvastha youth, Hari. After the marriage of his daughter Sankaradeva left everything to his son-in-law and made himself free from worldly ties.

First pilgrimage—Then at the age of thirty four Sankaradeva set out for a pilgrimage in 1483 A.D. with seventeen followers and friends. He visited almost all the sacred places of India, such as Gayā, Puri, Brindāvan, Mathurā, Kashi, Dwarakā, Prayaga, Setubandha, Barahkunda, Kurukshetra, Ayodhya, Badrikashram and so on. During his pilgrimage he had to enter into various religious discussions with learned pandits of different places. His method of delivery in arguments and mode of presenting his own creed and faith drew attention of the persons involved in the society and some of them were deeply impressed.

Effect of pilgrimage—Visiting sacred places and entering into religious discourses, the faith and principles propounded by Sankaradeva were doubly confirmed. His first pilgrimage lasted for twelve years. Towards the end of his journey at Badarikāśrama, he proclaimed his main ideas,

once more, in the matter of religion, in a hymnic song which runs as follows :—

राग धनश्री

ध्रुं—मन मेरि राम चरनहि लागु । तइ देखना अन्तक आगु ॥
 पद—मन—आयु क्षणे क्षणे दूटे । देखा—प्राण कोन दिने छुटे ॥
 मन—काल अजगरे गिले । जान तिलेके मरण मिले ॥
 मन—निश्चय पतन काया । तइ—राम भज तेजि माया ॥
 रे मन—इ सब विषय धान्धा । केने—देखि नेदेखस आन्धा ॥
 मन—सुखे पारे कैचे निन्द । तइ—चेतिया चिन्त गोविन्द ॥
 मन—जानिया शङ्करे कहे । देख राम बिने गति नहे ॥

“(Oh my mind ! rest on the feet of Ram.
 Don't you see, Death is confronting you ?
 Oh mind—Life is shortening, moment by
 moment.
 Look—Life may fly off at any moment.
 Oh mind—The serpent of time is swallowing
 all.
 Know—Death pounces upon instantly.
 Oh Mind—Body is surely perishable.
 You—Resort to Ram discarding illusions.
 Oh mind—All these are worldly
 entanglements.
 How is it—You close your eyes even though
 you see them—
 Mind—How can you sleep at ease ?

You—Think of Govinda in the heart of hearts.

Mind—Realising this Sankara says.

See—There is no other refuge but Ram.”

Thus he ended his first pilgrimage and proceeded towards home.

Second marriage—After returning from the first pilgrimage Sankaradeva settled at his ancestral home. A few months after this his grandmother Kherasuti Ai died. He performed all the necessary Sraddha ceremonies of his grandmother. Then he devoted his life to his mission. At the request of his friends and relatives Sankaradeva married a Bhuyan girl named Kalindi for the second time. He used to pass his time happily and comfortably with his relatives, increasing the number of his followers. But he could not pass his time so peacefully for a long time, owing to disturbance caused by Kacharis, the aboriginal tribes. It so happened that he was compelled to shift his residence to Gangmau where he managed to carry his missionary works without any disturbance for seven years. During the period of staying at Gangmau he was blessed with three male children namely Ramananda, Haricharan and Kamallochana. From Gangmau, Sankaradeva had to shift to Dhuwahāt as he was disturbed by the Bhutias. Here at Dhuwahāt he settled for

a long time and preached his creeds. The number of his followers increased day by day. This Dhuwahāt was known later on as Belagurithan.

Acquaintance with Mādhavadeva—Here at Dhuwahāt Sankaradeva was acquainted with Mādhava, a Kayastha youth. Mādhava was born in 1489 A.D. at Bandukā village in the district of modern Nowgong. He was a famous scholar and ardent devotee to Sakti. Once his mother was seriously ill and so he vowed to sacrifice a goat before goddess Kāmakshya if his mother were restored to her former health. Soon after this his mother recovered her health and consequently he requested his brother-in-law Gayapāni a disciple of Sankaradeva to get a goat fit for sacrifice. Gayapani being opposed to Mādhava's faith did not like to comply him with his request. However Mādhava came to know the reason of his reluctance and came over to the place of Sankaradeva with Gayapāni. Gayapāni introduced Mādhava to Sankaradeva. After formal reception they immersed themselves in a controversy pertaining to their respective faiths. Mādhava expounded the merit of Sakti worship and importance of worldly attachment quoting evidences from old scriptures, while Sankaradeva expounded and supported the merit of absolute devotion to the Supreme Being.

and the importance of renouncing worldly concern. Their discussion lasted for a long time. At last Mādhava's mouth was sealed in view of the motto contained in the following sloka quoted by Sankaradeva from the Bhāgavata purāna :

यथा तरोर्मूल निषेचनेन । तृप्यन्ति तत्स्कन्ध भूजोपशाखाः ॥
प्राणोपहाराच्छ यथेन्द्रियानं । तथाच सर्वार्चनमुच्यतेऽयम् ॥

“As the branches, leaves and foliage of a tree are nourished by the pouring of water only at the root thereof; as the limbs of the body are nourished by putting food only in the stomach, so all gods and goddesses are propitiated by the worship of Achyuta only”.

The very explanation of the sloka made Mādhava bend his head and bow down at the feet of Sankaradeva declaring superiority of Bhakti-cult. He converted himself to Sankaradeva's tenet and assumed the name Mādhavadeva.

Henceforth he gave up the idea of entering into worldly life. He dedicated his life for preaching his master's faith. He always remained with his master like a servant, a devotee. By unwearied service rendered to his master he set an example of how best to serve one's master. He was so devoted to his master that he could not resist the temptation of adding a new feature to his master's

doctrine under the name of Gurusevā—service to preceptor.

Propaganda Work.—Acquiring a true disciple in Mādhavadeva, Sankaradeva began to propagate his creed with redoubled force. Sankaradeva's creed and rites ran counter to the usual customs and ceremonies garbed under the influence of the Tantric ritualism which was the main source of livelihood of most of the Brahmans—the class of priests. The Bhakti cult propounded by Sankaradeva touched greatly the purse of the priesthood, so the priests militated against Sankaradeva's propagation, even they left no stone unturned to influence the king to take up their cause. Thereupon the Ahom king Chuhungmung Sargadew invited a gathering of learned pandits of different places for the trial of Sankaradeva. A long dispute ensued and at last Sankaradeva convinced the assembly much by his extraordinary deliberation of his views with scriptural evidences. The Brahmans failed to defend their cause consequently the king set Sankaradeva free pronouncing his creed blameless and pure. (Sankara Charita, verses 2146-2180.)

Death of His Son-in-law.—Sankaradeva's popularity grew more and more. The hostile Brahmans could not bear his growing popularity.

and they began to annoy and molest his disciples again and again. In the mean time the Ahom king ordered the people to help him in catching wild elephants. Sankaradeva with his disciples were ordered to do so. Unfortunately the elephants stampeded on the side of Sankaradeva's people. At this the king ordered to behead the offending party. Hearing the king's order the party at once took to flight but Mādhavadeva and Hari the son-in-law of Sankara were caught. Mādhavadeva was reported to be an innocent bachelor devotee so he was released but Hari was ordered to be beheaded. At this critical juncture Mādhavadeva consoled Hari by chanting the name of god and singing the following consolatory song :

ध्रुं—भयो भाइ साबधान यावे नाहि छुटे प्राण ।

गोविन्दर फरमान निकटे मिलव जान ॥

पद—जीवन यौवन थोड़ । सब मायामय छोड़ ॥

दुख सब करु मोड़ । हरि पदे मन योड़ ॥

तेजु सब अभिलाप । दूर करो मोहपाश ॥

हरिपदे करु आश । कह्य माधव दास ॥

“Be careful brother till life passes away. The decree of Govinda soon will grant you grace. Trifling is life ; trifling is youth. Discard all illusions. Dismiss all sorrows. Apply thy mind

at Hari's feet. Cast off desires. Break the trap of illusions. Pin thy hope on the feet of the Lord. Sayeth Mādhava the servant."

Thus Hari the devotee passed away in the midst of names of the Lord.

At Barpetā.—After this sad occurrence Sankaradeva decided to remain no longer in the Ahom territories and set on his journey towards Barpetā with some of his eminent followers. Barpetā was then within the kingdom of Koch kings. After staying a few years at Barpetā he shifted to Pātboushi where he lived for eighteen years. The Koch rulers were quite reasonable, favourable and sympathetic to Sankaradeva, so the propaganda work of his Neo-Vaisnavite cult reached its zenith. Here he set himself up both as a religious and social reformer. To give a permanent stamp to his activities Sankaradeva constructed his dwelling houses with prayer halls and other necessary sheds under the lead of Mādhavadeva. Making permanent settlement at Pāboushi in the modern Sub-division of Barpetā, Sankaradeva passed his time devoting himself to divine services. The arrangement of his constructions, the grandeur of his prayer hall, the observances of his rites, the sweet scent of sacred flowers, Basil leaves, together with incense-burning and the chantings of *namas*.

of Lord of lords, made all his surroundings charming, impressive and attractive and served to awaken religious fervour. The very imposing nature of his surroundings and environments made passers-by stand and pause to look and be moved at their sight.

Acquaintance with Dāmodaradeva.—There was a Brahman youth named Dāmodara in the locality where Sankaradeva lived. His father and Sankaradeva were great friends. One day Sankaradeva happened to see friend's child who was born in 1488 A.D. The child was blessed with several marks of greatness, so Sankaradeva named him Dāmodara. After the death of his father Dāmodara migrated to Patboushi near Sankaradeva's abode. He was a pious and religious minded man. He often joined and attended the religious discussions held in the gathering surrounding Sankaradeva. He was much impressed and followed the instructions and principles of Sankaradeva. Later on he assumed the name Dāmodaradeva and devoted his life in propagating and preaching the Neo-Vaisnavite cult. He took the function of converting the Brahmans to Vaisnavite cult. He made also his permanent abode at Patboushi and constructed his Satra therein.

Towards the later part of his life he had been

to Kooch Behar for his missionary work. The Koch king Lakshminarayana a son of king Naranārayan convert himself to Bhakti cult and became a disciple of Dāmodaradeva. From Kooch Behar, Dāmodara set out on a pilgrimage and visited several sacred places on the way to Puri. Returning from his pilgrimage Dāmodaradeva passed the last part of his life at Baikunthapur in Kooch Behar and he passed away in 1580 A.D. at the age of 92 in this Baikunthapur. Bhattadeva was his ardent disciple. He took the charge of all the work of Dāmodaradeva after his demise.

Acquaintance with Harideva.—Harideva a Brahman youth took his birth in 1493 A.D. at Nārayanapura near about the native place of Dāmodaradeva. He often heard about the new preachings of Sankaradeva from Dāmodaradeva. He also later on followed the teachings of the new tenet of Sankaradeva. He also like Damodaradeva took the function of converting Brahmans and kings to Neo-Vaisnavism. He ardently set himself to preaching and propaganding Vaisnavite cult. He had his Satra at Māneree in the village of Banhari in the modern Sub-division of Barpetā. He passed away in 1595 A.D. leaving the charge of his activities to his daughter Bhubaneswari Devi.

Acquaintance with Chaitanyadeva.—The question of Sankaradeva's acquaintance with Chaitanyadeva is still in the dark. However it has been said that after preaching his doctrine in southern India, Chaitanyadeva travelled to Manipur and on his way he sojourned for a while at Hājo in the modern Sub-division of Gauhati and the place where he resided is still known as Chaitanyaghopa. This saying seems to have no foundation as no reference regarding Chaitanyadeva's travelling to Assam after his travelling in southern India is found in any old scriptures in Bengali or in other languages, and as such this statement cannot be safely entertained. This is also supported by Dr. B. Majumder in his "Chaitanya Chariter Upadan", p. 557.

Further Preaching.—Sankaradeva engaged himself in preaching his creed far and wide. His far sighted activities and insight inspired the prominent disciples, followers, sympathisers and workers to unite together and take vow to spread the Vaisnavite cult in Assam, the land of Tantra and Sakti. All efforts have been made to establish the cause of the teachings and principles of his tenet largely and permanently.

Second Pilgrimage.—After the well establishment of his missionary works Sankaradeva intended

to set out on a pilgrimage for the second time in 1514 A.D. This time Mādhavadeva and other followers accompanied him. He visited several places of northern and southern India. He stayed at Puri for a longer period than in other places. The Vaishnava reformers of other provinces of India congregated together at Puri and made acquaintances with one another, among whom Ramananda of northern India, Harivyas of Nepal and Chaitanyadeva of Bengal were prominent. There ensued various discussions of debating nature in religious matters amongst them. People surrounding them were moved much with their discourses and sayings. Several miraculous talks on mysticism of religion appealed to the heart of the spectators.

One day all the renowned reformers were enjoying the dance of Devadāsi in the Nat Mandir of Jagannatha while Sankaradeva smiled a soft smile. Whereupon one of the saints remarked—“Sankara is fickle minded; he cannot control his emotions. Such an action is not befitting him.” Hearing such a cutting remark Sankaradeva said—“Pardon me, the smile is not for the act of dance but for the vile action of a Panda in the Bhogaghara (Cook-shed) where the panda licked up the hot particles of Bhoga, sprinkled on his fore-arm.”

Just an enquiry had been made and the fact was found true. The Panda had to undergo disciplinary and exemplary punishment and a fresh Bhoga was cooked and served. This wonderful phenomenon astonished the great reformers as well as the other pilgrims, and Sankaradeva was regarded and revered as a great saint of the east. Like this several other miraculous events took place in the temple of prayer at Puri. The most striking events were their debating discourses. The people surrounding them were moved much at their deliberation of religious discussions. Sankaradeva often had to enter into religious topics in assemblies, in various places on his way to pilgrimage. His profound scholarship and grave personality could easily awaken religious fervour in the heart of the people involved into the society. Some of those persons were so much astonished and moved that they could not resist the temptation of bowing down at the feet of Sankaradeva and of getting initiating themselves into his new creed, among whom the following persons deserve mention :— Ramākanta Misra of Mathurā; Trijuta Misra of Braja; Rādhakanta Misra of Gokula and ten Pandas of Puri (Sankaradeva aru Mādhavadeva, Bezbaruah, p. 153).

Token of Honour.—As a token of reverence

and honour the authority of the Srikshetra made arrangements to perpetuate the foot-steps of those four great reformers in the individual shrines specially meant for their worships. The sight of such shrines remains still as objects of worship to their followers and others. After a long stay all the reformers dispersed and proceeded towards their own lands.

Missionary Works.—On returning from the second pilgrimage, Sankaradeva settled at Barpetā specially at Patboushi. Here he engaged himself from morning till evening in preaching his new faith. Removed from all kinds of disturbances and having no longer anything to fear at the hands of despotic kings, he freely taught the principles of his creeds, which won daily a large number of disciples.

At Kooch Behar.—Sankaradeva's popularity grew so wide that there came an invitation from the King of Kooch Behar requesting him to proceed there, Sankaradeva visited Kooch Behar for several times and stayed there for reformatory purposes. This time he remained for a long time to preach his tenet. After a few months of his stay at Kooch Behar, Chilarai the brother of Naranārayan married Bhubaneswari Devi, niece of Sankaradeva. Days passed on and Sankaradeva was offered a

special official function in the Royal Court. The hold on him of the king's office hampered his missionary works so he tried his utmost to get rid of it.

Brindābania Cloth.—At last he made all possible arrangements to weave a silk cloth with scenes presenting Srikrishna's life works. For this purpose he opened a factory at Tantikuchi and engaged people under his own supervision. The cloth was painted and coloured and inserted with designs so as to suit the events of Srikrishna's life. After giving finishing touch he offered the cloth to the king as a presentation. The king was quite pleased to have a cloth so ornamented specially with marvellous deeds of Srikrishna. Being charmed the king released Sankaradeva from the Royal office he held. This cloth is known as "Brindabania cloth". It is 180 feet in length and 90 feet in breadth. The ground floor of the Kirtan ghar (prayer hall) at Barpetā has been marked according to the measurement of this Brindabania cloth. Being free from all Royal official duties Sankaradeva devoted his time in propagating and preaching his doctrine again and again.

Trial of His Faith.—The impressive teachings and growing popularity of Sankaradeva became

unbearable to the hostile Brahmins. They tried to pull Sankaradeva down. At last they approached the king and complained against his faith. Being pressed hard king Naranārāyana convened a meeting of Scholars and Pandits to hold a trial of Sankaradeva's faith. The hostile Brahmins invited Brahman Pandits of Benares and northern India. Sankaradeva was summoned and at the appointed time he entered the gathering reciting the following hymn in Sanskrit glorifying Lord Srikrishna :

मधु दानव दारण देववरं, वर वारिज लोचन चक्रधरं ।
 धरणी धर धारण ध्येयं परं, परमार्थ विद्या शुभ नाशकरं ।
 कर चुर्णित छेदिप भूरिगगं, भग भूषण कोऽर्चित पादयुगं ।
 युग नायक नागर वेश रुचिं, रुचिरांश पिधान शरीर शुचिं ।
 शुचि चामर वायु निसेव्य तनुं, तनुमध्यग देह सुवेश हनुं ।

After this hymn he recited the following verses extolling the exalted position of the king :

जय जय मल्ल नृपति रसवान ।
 याकेरि गुणगण सम नाहि आन ॥
 निजकुल कुमुद प्रकाशित, इन्दु ।
 गहीन गम्भीर धीर पेखिते सिन्धु ॥

The outstanding personality of Sankaradeva with uncommon mode of recitation of the verses

amazed the king and the audience alike. A pause and pin drop silence prevailed for some time. Sankaradeva was then requested to take his seat specially offered by the Royal officials. The aim and object of the gathering was fully explained by the Royal priest and then a regular debate ensued. Both the parties tried their utmost to clear up the points. Sankaradeva's arguments were rational while the opponents were emotional at last Sankaradeva asked the king to request the Brahmans to explain the sloka just recited by him in as many forms as they could but the Pandits could explain it in one way only while Sankaradeva did it in four different forms with full of annotations and allusions. The various forms of exposition of the verses rendered by Sankaradeva revealed the true nature of the Bhakti cult and as such the hostile Brahmans had to remain mute. After this the meeting adjourned for the next day.

Composition of Gunamala.—The next day also the debate continued as before. Arguments after arguments came forward and all of them were demolished by Sankaradeva with scriptural evidences. Before dissolving the meeting king Naranārayana requested the scholars and pandits to compose a very concise booklet containing the essence of the entire Bhagavaṭa Purana and present

it next morning without fail. The pandits considered it to be a tremendous work as if to insert an elephant into a lime pot **हाती मारि भुङ्कात भरोबा** and they flatly declined showing their inability to perform such a feat. Sankaradeva, however, agreed to give a trial. After the disposal of the gathering Sankaradeva came home and sat all night to write a synopsis of the Bhagavata Purana and finished it before the day broke and named the booklet as the "Gunamala".

Next morning Sankaradeva came to the Royal Court and chanted the contents of his puthi and presented it to the king, inserting it in a lime-pot with a painted picture of an elephant on the cover. The sight of this feat highly moved and charmed the audience. The sweet contents with the modulation of the chanter's voice inspired one and all and appealed to their heart so deeply that they could easily understand, remember and recite some of the verses on hearing the first recital. The very intonation made it comprehensible to all literate illiterate alike. Every one could enjoy the spirit of the Bhagavata Purana at ease within an incredibly short time. Even the hostile Brahmans also were amazed and surprised at the greatness of Sankaradeva. The whole Royal Court was resounded with the voice "Victory to Sankaradeva".

Then Sankaradeva resumed his seat in the midst of claps and applause.

Victory to Sankaradeva.—Thus all the opponents to Sankaradeva offered proof of their defeat by their own action and utterance. Consequently all the disputes were settled down. And as such king, Naranārayana realised that the scriptures brought by the opponents to defend their cause are futile and misleading. So he ordered to snatch away there scriptures and threw them into the river Tarocha in bits. Henceforth the course of Tarocha changed and the place where the bits of paper were thrown, came to be known as Kākat Kutā. Then king Naranārayana openly announced that Sankaradeva's doctrine is pure and blameless. It has been well said in the following verses :

ब्राह्मण सबर शास्त्र लैलेक काढ़िया ॥

समस्त शास्त्रक दारे खुटि खुटि करि ।

पेलाळे टरचा नैत शङ्काक नकरि ॥

“The scriptures of the Brahmans were taken away and thrown into the river Tarocha tearing in bits with a ‘big knife without any doubt.’” (Sankara Charit, verses 3488—3492).

King's Desire.—King Naranārayana, expressed his desire and willingness to adopt

Sankaradeva's faith, whereupon Sankaradeva addressed the king with the following words :—"For the interest of the kingdom a king is to observe various ceremonial functions which goes against the principles of Vaisnavite cult; hence it is not desirable for a king to adopt Bhakti cult." This reasonable answer of Sankaradeva appealed to the heart of the king and resisted that temptation of being his follower. Sankaradeva's courage of conviction and steady resolution in avoiding the king's offer astounded the whole assembly, and once more all the people shouted "Victory to Sankaradeva". Thus the gathering ended.

Sankaradeva being released from all sorts of disturbances devoted himself solely to the propagation work of his creed. He spent the last part of his life at Patboushi. People from all quarters poured to his place for spiritual satisfaction. He imparted all sorts of instructions, keeping moral, social and religious objects in view, to all people surroundings.

Kākat-Kutā.—After a few years Sankaradeva had to go to the site of Kākat-Kutā in Kooch Behar for missionary purpose. King Naranārayana, being inspired by Sankaradeva's greatness, worshipped him at his heart so long. On hearing of arrival at Kākat-Kutā, the king sent for him

with an earnest request, once more, to initiate him. The messengers came and apprised him of the king's intention. Sankaradeva was then one hundred and nineteen years old and he devoted himself to prayer carolling in his Namghar. Hearing the intention of the king he said to the messengers :—"It is a glory to the king that he still harbours the idea of initiation. If God permit he may fulfil his desire in a day or two. Let him prepare for the purpose. Let God's will be fulfilled." The king's people went back and reported the sayings of Sankaradeva.

Last Days.—Sankaradeva used to pass his time in devotion, meditation and chanting Namas of the Lord of lords. The more his end neared the more he kept communion with the Lord of lords. Having realised that he is to quit this sphere of mundane activities, he left directions for the arrangements of all his institutions. He vested his powers in his ardent disciple Mādhavadeva as his successor in the matter of religion and reformatory functions while he made his eldest son Ramananda of his worldly wealth and riches. Making Mādhavadeva the spiritual authority as his successor in religious matter, Sankaradeva advocated that it is not necessary to observe hereditary claim nor caste superstition in vesting

the power of spiritual guidance. This is one of the specialities of Sankaradeva's tenet.

Thus making all possible arrangements on permanent basis Sankaradeva freed himself from all anxieties. Now he absolutely engrossed himself in chanting hymns and Namas. Gradually he was inclining to talk little but think much. He felt his last summon. He took ablutions. He put on pure, white and new clothes. He squatted on a seat specially designed for the final purpose and he set himself to deep thinking and meditation. At last he surrendered himself to the Lord of lords, Srikrishna. The signal of the approaching end of Sankaradeva's life was evident. Hence all his disciples, followers, admirers and sympathisers congregated and began to pray, chanting Namas and hymns beside him. The last moment signalled and Sankaradeva passed away in the midst of prayers, hymns, namas and Bargeets. The eldest son of Sankaradeva was present by the side of his death-bed, and so he could perform all the funeral ceremonials. The news of passing away of Sankaradeva ran throughout the whole of Kāmarupa. King Naranārayana was mortified at the demise of Sankaradeva. He rendered his Royal help to perform Sankaradeva's sraddha ceremony befitting the occasion under the lead of Mādhavadeva. Thus the

great reformer, the great author, the great artist and the great genius Sri Sankaradeva left his mortal coil in 1568 A.D. at Kākat-kutā in Kooch-Behar in the month of Bhadra.

भाद्र माहत शुक्ल द्वितीया तिथि भैला ।

सेहि दिना गुरु नर-नाटक एरिला ॥

(verse 3834).

Renaissance.—Sankaradeva was a great reformer and a nation-builder. He was a man of great personality with extreme humility. His followers and disciples look upon him as an incarnation of God Vishnu. They surrounded his memory with celestial halo as due to an emanation of God-Head. Sankaradeva was a strong moralist. He did not care for caste-prejudice. He was an advocate of the worship of one Supreme Being who pervaded throughout the whole universe.

From the historical point of view it can be traced out that the period from the fifteenth century to the sixteenth century was the period of world wide reformation. In the far west in Europe, Martin Luther led the reformatory movement. In India four religious reformers took birth. The religious field of India has been greatly changed by those reformers. They are Hariviyas in Nepal, Ramananda in Orissa, Chaitanyadeva in Bengal and Sankaradeva in Assam.

TEACHINGS OF SANKARĀDEVA

Religious chaos.—Prior to Vaisnavite movement Saktism, and Tantrikism, mingled with pseudo Buddhistic culture, were the prevailing religion of ancient Kāmarupa. These three main cultures blending together induced the general folk to practice religious ceremonials and social functions in various forms as promulgated in the Tantras. Kāmakhya situated in the centre of Kāmarupa is found, in the long past, to be seat of all sorts of Trantric rituals. In course of time religious rites and social orders reduced to a chaotic state. The mass of the people stooped to a very low and degraded position for want of real exposition of religious intricacies which had been sealed under the impenetrable garb of Sanskrit lore. To uplift the mass from this depth, Sankaradeva set his heart to the study of the Vedas, the Vedanta, the Geeta, the Bhāgavata purāna and the like, so as to expound a proper form of religion.

Bhakti cult—At last he expounded Bhakti cult, the treasure of faith hidden in Sanskrit scriptures. He says in his Bhāgavata purāna in Dasama :

शुनियोक सर्व्व जन,

कृष्णत अर्पिया मन,

महाभागवत कथा सार ।

इसे पुरानर सूर्य

भक्तिर प्रकाशक

समस्त वेदरे सारोद्धार ॥

The above verses and the subsequent ones give the following gist :

“The Bhāgavata purāṇa is like the sun of all the purāṇas, the essence of all the Vedas; the displayer of Bhakti cult : or love for God. This Bhakti cult prevailed formerly in the Vaikuntha. After the elapse of half the time, it had been revealed to Brahma by grace of Srikrishna. From Brahma it was revealed to Narada; from Narada to Vyasa and from Vyasa to Sage Suka. Thus it came down from the Vaikuntha to the earth”. And this Bhakti cult—the love for God had been brought and made accessible by Sankaradeva. Hence Mādhavadeva says in his Nama-ghosa :

आदि सत्य युगे शुद्ध धर्म

आङ्गिलेक मात्र हरिनाम

देव सवे गुप्त करिले करि कपट ।

हेन हरिनाम व्यक्त करि

समस्त लोकक उद्धारिला

श्रीमन्त शङ्करे भाङ्गिला सबारो पट ॥ .

“In the golden age, devoted recitation of the Nama of Hari was the pure religion which had been kept hidden by the Devas due to hypocrisy. Tearing this veil Sankaradeva expounded this hidden religion of Harinama and saved all”.

Main principles of his doctrine—The cult of Sankaradeva is known as the Sanātan Bhāgavati Dharma and later on Mahāpurusiya. It is comprised of mainly four principles. The first and foremost is the comprehension of Param-Brahma, the all pervasive Supreme Being in the form of Vishnu as extolled in the Vedās. The second is the Eka-sarana or absolute and undivided devotion to the Supreme Being in the form of Srikrishna as extolled in the Geetā. The third is Sat-sanga or fraternity with pious devines as enjoined by the Bhagavata purana. The fourth is the divine services in the form of prayer or chanting the holy namas of Lord of lords.

These four principles have been formulated in the following four condensed catagorical forms :

- (1) Guru—Param Brahma—Supreme consciousness.
- (2) Deva—The Supreme Being personified in the form of Srikrishna.
- (3) Nāma—The attributes belonging to qualified God.
- (4) Bhakta—Incarnation of God in the form Srikrishna.

शङ्कर देवेयो पुनरपि देखाइलन्त ।

गुरु देव नाम भक्त चिनाइ दिलन्त ॥

“Sankaradeva again showed and made known the gist of Guru, Deva, Nāma and Bhakta.”

Qualified Monism—Sankaradeva's tenet is qualified Monism—Vishīṣṭa—dwaitabad—as expounded by Ramanuja in Southern India. It differs from the Absolute Monism of Sankarācharyya and from the Dualism of Maddhācharyya. It is based on allegiance to Supreme God and chanting hymns and prayers. It is abhorrence of animal sacrifice, idolatry and pseudo esoteric rites. His qualified monism maintains the relationship between God and man as that of the Master and the Servant—Dāsyabhāva—and hence Sankaradeva often describes himself as the servant of Srikrishna—

कृष्णर किङ्करे शङ्करे भणे । बोला हरि हरि समस्त जने ॥

“The servant of Srikrishna writes “all people chant the nāma of Hari”.

Personal God—The idea of God according to Sankaradeva is impersonal and attributeless. But for the attainment of this idea he comprehended that God is endowed with all the best attributes as if He is a personal One. In short attributeless God has become attributive in his hands. This personal idea of God has been extolled in the Geetā

and the Bhāgavata purāṇa. This idea is embodied in the following sloka . . .

सर्वं धर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥

“Leaving aside all other religions (Oh Arjuna) be dependent on Me alone and worship Me only. I will save you from all sins, do not fear.”

Supreme Soul—According to Śaṅkaradeva God is Supreme Soul—Paramātmā—and is eternal and changeless. The individual soul—Atmā—is a part of the Paramātmā, like the rays of the sun, and as such it is indestructible, unchangeable and eternal. All other things are mere matter, changeable and perishable. Salvation is to be achieved by taking Nāma. Purity of mind and body must be observed as cleanliness is next to Godliness. Bhakti, love for God, is the easiest and comprehensive path to achieve and attain salvation and grace of God.

कृष्णकेसे मात्र, भजे यिदोजने, अव्यभिचारी भक्ति ।

तिनि गुण अति, क्रमि ब्रह्मरूप, पावे सिटो महामति ॥

Its parallel sloka in the Geetā is :

माश्च योऽव्यभिचारेण भक्तियोगेन सेवते ।

सगुणान् समतीत्यै तान् ब्रह्म भूयाय कल्पते ॥

“He the noble soul, who worship Krishna only with undeviating devotion, gets the shape of Supreme Being transgressing the three properties of matter”.

Appealing to all—Sankaradeva's creed embraces all classes of people without any distinction of castes. It is void of elaborate, gorgeous and pompous ceremonials such as Puja, homa, sacrifice and the like and as such it appeals less to the rich, the aristocratic, the kings, than the people in general.

Gist of his creed—The gist of Sankaradeva's teachings can be summarised in the following extracts :—

(1) Give up all religion and take refuge in Me (Srikrishna). I shall deliver thee (Arjuna) from all sins, Sorrow not.

(2) Practise motiveless devotion (Ahaituki Bhakti) to God.

(3) “If the persons to whom God shows His grace, shake off all hypocrisy and take refuge in Him with all their hearts, they transcend His Maya and are purged of the ego. Taking refuge in God is the highest good of men.” This doctrine of grace finds place in Sankaradeva's tenet as expounded in the Bhāgavata purāṇa.

(4) The real religion of Iron Age consists in unmotivated recitation of the Nama of Hari only.

(5) The Nama of Hari is quite competent to destroy all sorts of sin as fire burns everything combustible and non-combustible.

(6) God can only be tied down by pure Bhakti and not by knowledge nor by deeds nor by renunciations, nor by gifts.

(7) All virtues and piety keep hidden in the Nama of Krishna. The real form of religion exists in taking the Nama of the Lord devoutly.

(8) There is no need of worship of gods and goddesses. Be devoted unto Krishna and unto recitation of His nama only.

(9) Dāśya Bhakti is the proper Bhakti which maintains the relationship of the master and the servant.

(10) Real Bhakta prefers the serving of His master the Lord of lords constantly to achieving salvation at a time.

(11) Prayer consists in desireless devotion.

(12) There is no room for worshipping either gods or goddesses. Hari is the only object of worship and not Lakshmi who serves Hari.

(13) Complete resignation to God is absolutely needed.

(14) No idol worship is entertained. Hence it is said :

अव्यक्त ईश्वर हरि, किमते पूजिवा ताङ्क, व्यापकत किवा विसर्ज्जन ।
एतावन्त मूर्त्ति शून्य, केन मते चिन्तिवाहा, राम बुलि शुद्ध करा मन ।

“Unmanifested is the Supreme Deity, how could you worship Him? How could you meditate on Him who is formless? So purge your mind by reciting the Nama of Rama.

तीर्थ बुलि करे जलत शुद्धि । प्रतिमात करे देवता बुद्धि॥

वैष्णवत नाइ इसब मति । गरुतो अधम कृष्ण बदति ॥

“To seek spiritual purgation in sacred waters, to impute divinity to idols, these ideas are never entertained by the Vaisnavas. He who harbours such ideas is worse than even a cow : says Krishna”.

(15) Sankaradeva entertained that form of Bhagavata Dharma as expounded by one of the nine Siddhas to king Nimi, in the following lines :

All sorts of customary, social, shastric, religious ceremonies rites and offerings are to be entirely offered in the name of Srikrishna.

(16) God is all in all and He will protect His devotees—this is a firm belief of Sankaradeva. His devotees do not want salvation nor do they

want to be merged in Him. They want to be in love of devotion. They want to be free from the trap of the world and be eternal servant of Him.

(17) The vision of God-head according to Sankaradeva is like the following :

“Oh God ! Thou art the Supreme Soul of the world. Thou art the creator of the world. The mind and destiny of the world are in Thee. Thou art the creation, the cause, static and dynamic. Thou art the heart of all hearts and truth of all truths. Thou art in everything and everything is in Thee. Owing to ignorance and want of illumination people think of Thee as different one. No craving for enjoyment of beatitude nor for salvation is wanted but devotion at Thy feet is the only object wanted by Thy devotees.”

(18) When devotees are found to be so engrossed in God's name with complete resignation, God cannot but embrace and protect His devotees. In such a position God sayeth like the following :—

भक्तेसे मोर हृदि जानिवा निश्चय ।

भक्त जनर जाना आमिसे हृदय ॥

मोत बिने भक्ते निचिन्ते किछु आन ।

भक्तर परे मंइ निचिन्तोहो आन ॥

“(Oh my beloved devotee Uddhava!) Know it certain that my heart is devotee's. I am the heart

of the devotees. My devotees think of none but Me. I also think of none but My devotees."

Comparison of his creed with the creeds of other reformers.—There are several sects of Vaisnavism in India. The Vaisnavism expounded by Sankaradeva differs from some of them in some particular respects and some of these may be cited below :—

(1) Most of the forms of Vaisnavism in southern India and in Bengal worship Sita and Ram; Radhesyam; Radha and Krishna as a pair but Vaisnavism in Assam does not entertain such worship of pair with the female-sex adjoined.

(2) Like Ramanuja, Sankaradeva also propagated qualified Monism (Visistadwaitabad) but according to Sankaradeva Srikrishna is the Supreme Being, the primal cause of the universe in the form of Nārāyana and it differs from the Māyabad expounded by Sankarāchāryya.

(3) Surrender to one God i.e., "Eka-sarana" as maintained in southern India, Sankaradeva also entertained it.

(4) In the temple of prayer of Sankaradeva a sacred book specially the Bhāgavata Purāna is placed on a pedestal or a tray, like the Granth Saheb in Sikh temples, instead of installing any idol.

(5) Sankaradeva entertained no caste distinction like Manavala Mahamuni of southern India in the religious matter.

(6) Sankaradeva's vision of Narayana in Vaikuntha is like that of Ramanuja's vision of Vaikuntha-Godya unlike in other provinces.

(7) Kevaliyas of Assam Vaisnavism are celibates like Kevalin, a class of Bhaktas, sustained by Ramanuja.

(8) Women are not allowed to mix in prayer and devotion.

(9) Different saints have different honorific titles :—

Ramananda is called—Swami ;

Nanaka is called—Guru ;

Tulsidas is called—Goswami ;

Chaitanyadeva is called—Mahāprabhu ;

Sankaradeva is called—Mahāpurusa.

(10) Different saints epitomised their cults in different numbers of Holy Namas of God :—

Sankaradeva expounded—four Namas ;

Harivyas expounded—eight Namas ;

Ramananda expounded—twelve Namas ;

Chaitanyadeva expounded—sixteen Namas.

(11) Sankaradeva's process of initiation is—
Sarana.

Chaitanyadeva's process of initiation is—
Dikshya.

Ramanuja's process of initiation is—
Saranagati.

Harivyasa's process of initiation is—
Sangha-sarana.

Sankaradeva's process of chanting Nama
is—Kirtana.

Chaitanyadeva's process of chanting
Nama is—Sangkirtana.

Ramananda's process of chanting Nama
is—Mantra.

Harivyasa's process of chanting Nama
is—Mridugeet.

Sankaradeva's premises for prayer is
called—Satra.

Chaitanyadeva's premises for prayer is
called Motha.

Ramananda's premises for prayer is
called—Motha.

Sankaradeva's relationship between God
and devotee is—Dāśya.

Chaitanyadeva's relationship between God
and devotee is—Madhura.

Sankaradeva's ideal devotee is—Uddhava.

Chaityanadeva's ideal devotee is—Radha.

Different Sects.—The Vaishnava cult in Assam

has been reformed by Sankaradeva in the form of Eka-sarana Bhāgavati, Dharma. Sankaradeva made all possible organisations and propagations to cause a permanent establishment of his tenet. So long he was alive all his activities, principles, ceremonial rites, epistolary ecstasy and formalities were observed and followed with full swing without the slightest deviation and difference. After the passing away of the founder Sankaradeva there arose differences of opinion regarding the observances of religious rites and formalities. Though the main spring and principles with mottoes were kept in tact, at last the differences of minor elements led to split of the main Vaisnavite tenet. The branch led by Mādhavadeva assumed the name of Mahāpurusiya; that led by Dāmodaradeva assumed the name of Dāmodariya and that led by Harideva assumed the name of Harideviya. Among which the branch maintained by Mādhavadeva in the name of Mahapurusiya follows and observes fully and properly all the injunctions laid down by Sankaradeva in his doctrine.

THE MAHĀPURUSIYA SECT

Principles.—It is sustained by Mādhavadeva with full swing like his master. To keep up the

tenet of his master he made all possible organisations and propagations. He vested in his disciples all missionary functions with the idea of establishing Satras to carry out the activities successfully. The growing and continuing success in religious propagation provoked Brahmanic hostility afresh. Sometimes Mādhavadeva had to go to the court of king Lakshminārayana for trial but he had been honourably acquitted as he could prove himself innocent. He spent the last part of his life at Kooch-Bihar and passed away in 1599 A.D. At the time of his passing away he nominated Mathura Das Ata to the authoritative seat of religion (as Adhikar) at Barpeta Satra.

Three main centres—Three main centres have been established in three different places in order to up-keep the activities of Mahāprursiyaism—namely, Kamalabari Satra in Upper Assam with Badula or Padma Ata; Barpeta Satra in central Assam with Mathura Ata; and in Kooch-Bihar, Madhupur and Bhela Satras with Beharia Bar Vishnu Ata as their spiritual guides. In these three centres Kevaliyas, the dedicated devotees, used to live in a line of huts, called Kevaliyahati with a life of celibacy. This system of celibacy had been emphasised by Mādhavadeva who renounced the worldly affairs since his initiation.

Following his example some of his disciples gave up the idea of married life. Those celibates are called Kevaliyas or Udashins. They live in small huts in the precincts of the Satra called Kevaliyahati. They are reputed to be absolute or solitary devotees observing intricacies of Mahāpurusiyaism carrying on the daily devotional formalities in the Satras.

Other centres—In addition to these three main centres some other centres have been established for missionary purpose, such as—Sundaridia Satra with Ramacharana Thakur; Chamaria Satra with Barvishnu Ata; Barjaha Satra with Keshab Charan or Bhato Kuchi Ata; Heramdda Satra with Parhia Mādhava; Dhopar Guri Satra with Lakshmi Kanta Ata; Khatara Satra with Lōchakunia Govinda Ata; Debera Satra with Bansi Gopaldeva Mehera and some other Satra with Jadoomani and Laiti Satra with Srihari as spiritual guides.

Initiation—A desiring and deserving person is entitled to get initiation at Guru's hand alone or with mates. The mates thus receiving initiation at a time are vowed friends throughout life. In selecting mates no caste distinction is observed. The Mahāpurusiyas are to worship God and chant his namas three times daily at least. Worship of

Guru is the first and foremost item of its kind. They are to read the Kirtan, the Nāmaghosa, the Bhāgavata purāna, the Geetā and sing Bargeets and the like daily and timely under compulsion. As a rule they are not to observe any caste distinction in selecting their Gurus. There should be no hereditary claim of Gurus also. The disciple has his own option in selecting his Guru.

It has been popularly said that Sankaradeva did not accept as his disciples, a king, a Brahman, or a woman. This version is not literally true. In case of a king he flatly refused to be preceptor but in case of a Brahman or a woman he did not do so. He did not accept Brahmans, as disciples, who grossly engaged in performing Karmakanda only, as also a woman who is devoid of chastity. This principle is strictly followed by the Mahāpurusiya up till now.

THE DĀMODARIYA SECT.

Principles—It is sustained by Dāmodaradeva with slight deviation from the Mahāpurusiya. It follows the same sacred scriptures such as the Kirtan, the Nāmaghosa, the Bargeets for divine services, like the Mahāpurusiya. Damodariyas generally select Gurus from the Brahman Caste. They do not entertain Non-Brahman gurus as the

Mahāpurusiyas do. In their hands Brahmans get preference to Non-Brahmans. Their speciality lies in accepting kings also as disciples. And as such Damodariya Satras are generally richer in wealth and property than the Mahāpurusiya Satras.

Satras—At the time of passing away Damodaradeva nominated his ardent disciple Bhattadeva to his religious seat at Patboushi. In order to have a permanent establishment some other Satras have been founded in different places of Assam such as—Chari Satriya in upper Assam—Dakshinpat Satra with Vanamalideva; Kurwabahi Satra with Misradeva; Garmur Satra with Jaiharideva; Aunihati Satra with Niranjana-deva as spiritual guides. In Kooch-Bihar, Baikunthapur Satra with Baladeva; in southern Kāmarupa Garaimari Satra with Santadeva as spiritual guides.

HARIDEVIYA SECT.

Principles—This sect is maintained by the followers of Harideva. This sect also follows the same principles in all matters as those of the Dāmodariyas. The special feature of this sect lies in honouring and respecting women which is evinced by the act of electing Harideva's daughter

Bhubaneswaridevi as the spiritual guide of his Satra at Maneri at the modern Subdivision of Barpetā.

Satras—In addition to this chief religious seat of Maneri Satra some other Satras founded later on, such as—Bāniakuchi Satra with Jagannāthdeva; Jagara Satra with Haricharandeva; Chameri Satra with Krishnadeva; and Parena Satra with Narāyanadeva as spiritual guides.

* *Relationship of these three sects*—There is no distinction among these sects in social orders and functions and principles of religion. No impediment lies in matrimonial connections among them except in the matter of caste distinctions. All of them are at liberty to enjoy religious festivals in Satras and national festivals about. All of them follow the same scriptures in chanting namas of God, and observing divine services. A slight difference is found in observances of rites and formalities. Their procedure differs but principles remain the same.

THE INSTITUTION OF SATRA.

The Principles of the Satras—The Satra institutions established by the Neovaisnavite cult give an exposition of social organisation of Assam. Such institutions are inaugurated in every Hindu

village. In these institutions people of all classes and castes whether devotees, disciples, followers or sympathisers meet together and perform all the works social, moral and religious. These institutions have hold on the social orders in proper form. In spiritual order no distinction of caste is held in these institutions. In a gathering of worshippers people of all ranks and orders have the same privilege and equal status. Hence it has been said in the following :

स्मरोक मात्र हरि दिने राति । नवाछे भक्ति जाति अजाति ॥

“Bhakti—devotion to God—holds no distinction of caste at all. Let the people think of God only day and night.

It has been also said, “In reciting the nama of Srikrishna requires not one to belong to higher caste, even a person of lowest caste, say a Chandal, is superior to another higher caste, if he devoutly recites the nama of Srikrishna”. Any and every body can read sacred books and chant the namas of God. Any devotee irrespective of caste can enjoy the privilege of distributing the offerings (Naivedya) to Vishnu, with full observation of formalities prescribed for the uprpose, to all classes of people. This is the main spring to maintain equality in spiritual gathering.

There seems to be some differences in purely social matters. Highly cultured people and Brahmans in general get preference to others in a social gathering. Females as a rule are not allowed to sit together with males in worshipping God. They have their own congregation in the side room of prayer-hall.

By introducing such systems in the Satra institution all the evils and abuses existing in the society have been uprooted. The door of the temple of prayer has been kept open to all classes of people. In short under the canopy of these Satra institutions all people whether Brahmans, Kshetriya, Vaisya or Sudra can feel equal status in the matter of spirituality.

Account of the Satras—The following is the brief account of the Satra institution established by the Mahāpurusiyaism where the social organisation took its birth.

The Satra, or the monastery system comprises of four main compartments—(1) The kirtanghar or Namaghara (temple or hall of prayer), (2) the Manikut or Bhajghar, (3) the Banha (abode of the Adhikar), (4) Kevoliya-hati (abode of celibates). Every Satra must have a tank of its own for ablution. A Satra is a holy shrine of Asrama of Neo Vaisnavite cult as reformed by Sankaradēva.



The Bhāgavata Purāṇ installed on a Throne.

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It is the centre of the initiatory ceremonies and religious rites and functions. Further it is a seat of social and moral discussions in general. Full details of a Satra is given below :

(1) *The Kirtan ghar*—It is the most essential part of a Satra. It is a house of three roofs one of which is gabled. A sacred scripture containing life works of Srikrishna, specially the Bhāgavata-puranā is installed in a throne instead of idols as an object of worship. A light on the right hand side of the throne is placed on a stand. The throne is decorated with flower specially such as lotus, leaf of Tulasi (Basil) besmeared with scented chandan-paste. Just in front of the throne another holy book is placed in a pedestal tray for daily chanting. All the offerings (Naivadyas) are placed before the throne just at the beginning of the chanting of Namas. The throne thus adorned is revered and reckoned as the highest or the most supreme authority bearing on all human affairs including religious, social, moral, intellectual and judicial.

Process of prayer—All devotees and disciples with the Adhikar and celibates squat together and hold their congregational prayers in this Kirtan-ghar. This congregational prayer opens with a formal process from the beginning to the end

during which prayers, hymns, Bargeets, Bhatimā, Ghosā, Pad and the like propitiating Lord Krishna, are chanted in chorus with sonorous and modulating tune using musical appliances such as Tals (cymbal).

At the end of the prayer, the offerings placed before the throne are distributed among the people in the congregation. The flower, the leaf of Basil, and, garland of Bakula flower placed on a tray before the throne known as Nirmali—are also distributed. This Nirmali and Naivedya are regarded and revered as the purest of all and as such nobody objects regarding the caste of the distributors. This process prevails in Srikshetra and it is a significance of non-recognition of caste distinction in religious matters. This process of congregational prayer is generally known as Hari-prasanga.

Prasangas—From early in the morning till late in the evening, fourteen Hari Prasangas are performed and observed regularly in times fixed for each Prasanga severally. There is a gradation of Prasangas just to suit the mental disposition, emotions, feelings contemplation and course of thinking of human being concurring with the order of time. Each Prasanga has its special features in respect of its chanting prayers and Bargeets.

Full details of the Fourteen Hari Prasangas :

First Prasanga—Matins—Comprises of singing Bargeets (Songs describing God's attributes).

Second Prasanga—Matins—Comprises of reciting Bhattimā (praises of God).

Third Prasanga—Morning services—Nāma-kīrtan comprises of (1) primary invocation of Nāma, (2) Prosodical recitation of nāma in couple, (3) Chanting of Nāma in Ghosā forms, (4) Chanting nāma for ceasing of Nāma-kīrtan, (5) Chanting of formula of Nāma.

Fourth Prasanga—Morning services comprises of recitation of passages from the Bhāgavata purāna or the Geetā.

Fifth Prasanga—Morning services comprises of recitation of selected passages from holy scriptures.

Sixth Prasanga—Afternoon services comprises of reading and giving explanation of passages from sacred puthis.

Seventh Prasanga—Afternoon services in the form of Nāma kīrtan as in that of third Prasanga with separate injunctions.

Eighth Prasanga—Afternoon services com-

prising in reading and explaining passages from the Bhāgavata purāṇa or the Geetā.

Ninth Prasanga—Vespers—evening services—comprises of reciting Gunamālā (attributes of God).

Tenth Prasanga—Evening services comprises of reciting Lilamala (Life works of Sri-krishna).

Eleventh Prasanga—Evening services comprises of reciting Bhattimās.

Twelveth Prasanga—Evening services comprises of singing of Bargeets.

Thirteenth Prasanga—Evening services comprises of Nāma kirtanas as in that of third Prasanga with different injunctions.

Fourteenth Prasanga—Evening services comprises of reciting selected passages from sacred scriptures.

(2) *Manikut or Banjghar*—It is a house with two bended roofs constructed at the back side of the main Kirtan-ghar attaching to the Chapel. In it holy scriptures originally in manuscripts with other things pertaining to Nāmghar, are kept.

These manuscripts are respected and regarded more than the printed ones of later times. Puthis in manuscripts are often written in Bhurja-patra-Sachipat—bark of the aloë. Leaves of the many

puthis are painted with ornamental borders and decorated with pictures to illustrate the main theme. At the middle of each leaf there is a hole perforated, through which a string or a spindle is inserted to fasten all the leaves together. These puthis are kept in wooden boxes. They are revered like an object of worship and as such purity with formalities is observed in taking out the puthis from the shelf. Deserving Bhaktas and devotees are allowed to read the puthis in an assembly of general public.

(3) *Banha*—the *Abode of the Spiritual Guide*—It is a house generally constructed on the side of the Kirtanghar with a Cook-shed, Bharal house and other necessary sheds. It must have a Veranda on the front and the sides. In the front Veranda the Adhikāra the spiritual guide of the Satra used to take his seat specially meant for him leaning to a post to the north. The Adhikāra receives the devotees and others with blessings and offerings of Nirmali. An Adhikāra may lead a worldly life according to the tradition of individual Satra. He is expected to be a cultured and devoted personage having a complete idea of the cult of the Vaisnavism with its initiatory and ceremonial functions and rites and to be an observer of all the formalities prescribed for the tenet. Moreover he is expected

to possess some facility in composition displayed in writing of a drama embodying some item of Krishna-lila or allied subjects. To him the Satra is entrusted for its management. He is vested with full power to hold the office of the Satra.

(4) *Kevaliya hati*—the abode of celibates—It is a range of houses with Cook-shed attached. All the inmates must devote their life in observing and discharging duties concerning the satra both of daily round and of festive occasions. They are to lead their lives in such a manner as to set ideals regarding the doctrine they follow. They are supposed to have the power to radiate the mysticism of their faith. The inmates must lead the life of celibacy throughout so long they remain in the Hati.

Principles of the Society—A Satra is not only a place of initiation and chanting prayers but also a centre of social and moral teachings. After the end of daily prasanga in the afternoon, all Samuha Bhaktas squat together in the courtyard of the Kirtanghara and discuss all the matters involving in the uplift of disciples, followers, sympathisers and villagers in general. The gathering is inaugurated by the Adhikara with Sermons and instructions. A small council is elected and nominated under the supervision of the Adhikāra. This

council is quite competent to conduct all the business brought to their notice with previous or instantaneous intimation. They settle up all the disputes. Their judgment is final and must be abided by, otherwise a disciplinary measure is to be inflicted upon the person violating the order. Sometimes a fine is imposed in taking measures. The fine must be realised, otherwise, the defaulter shall have to remain excommunicated. The fine realised thus goes to the common fund of Samuha Bhakata utilised for the common benefit of all. This act of social order established in the arena of the Satras, maintains the society in well disciplined and regular organised form. This is a sort of village parliament or self-government. This is a rare and unique aspect of Sankara's teachings. In his teachings religious and social blending is brought about. His teachings foster the idea of brotherhood of man demolishing the idea of untouchability, differences and distinctions whatsoever for stamping permanently the common cause of all. This is a very uncommon feature of the Assam Vaisnavism, in the field of the religion of the world.

THE WRITINGS OF SANKARADEVA

Introduction—Sankaradeva's new creed is to infuse a new spirit and inculcate lessons of spirituality into the hearts of all and sundry. The mission of his life had always been to appeal to the popular imagination. To attain and achieve this aim, he founded an extensive literary lore. All cultural aspects of human life and society with spiritual innovations were revealed through the range of his literature. The extent of his literature included all the outlines of human knowledge. He adopted a form of language meant to be intelligible and understandable both by the literate and the illiterate alike. He handled all the branches of literature to fulfil the demand of the people in General. Most of his puthis in verse were written in old Kamarupi language. He was a master of original works with original thinking, at the same-time, was an expert in translating works of Sanskrit. In the work of translation he kept the spirit and diction of the original, yet it seemed as fresh as the original. He translated the Bhagavatā purana in part. He composed and compiled some anecdotes selected from the puranas. Most of his works presented the Vaisnavite cult with illustration replete with

Srikrishna's life, teachings and deeds. He composed psalms, bearing the Bhakti aspects called the Bargeets. He wrote dramas to celebrate the actions of God so as to make the popular mind disposed towards righteousness. He introduced various metric measures in his works together with musical appliances so as modulate the tune of the heart. To awaken the feeling of devotion and kindle up the flame of religious fervour he represented fully the works and teachings of Srikrishna through the current of poetry, music, song and drama. Thus his works revealed the true colour of Vaisnavism. In the literary field Sankaradeva was greatly assisted by his eminent disciple Mādhavadeva. To add to the literary products of his preceptor, Mādhavadeva composed several books personally. Being on the same line of activity Bhattadeva a renowned disciple of Dāmodaradeva translated and composed a few books also. All these books too rendered much help to missionary and propaganda works of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult.

Through all these works Vaisnavite scholars created a vast range of literary pursuits so as to make and establish a permanent basis and an impression in the heart of all people both male and female, literate and illiterate, with subtle ideas

of religion expounded by the great reformer Sankaradeva.

Let the subsequent pages illustrate some of the main works of Sankaradeva together with Mādhavadeva and Bhattadeva with their characteristics under the headings of poetry, drama, Bargeet, Bhatima and Chatiha showing metres and rhetorical figures used in them.

POETICAL WORKS OF SANKARADEVA

(1) *The Uddhava Samād*—It is said that this is his first poetical book. It contains the essence of the tenth canto of the Bhāgavata Purāna. It deals with the matter extracting the motto of the Dasama and hence it is called Uddhava Samād. Its language is lucid, simple and comprehensive. It has been written while the author was in his teens, says one of his biographers :—

आत अनन्तरे शङ्कर देबर

उद्देश बत्सर भैला ॥

* * *

दशमर पुरानर श्लोक पाइ ।

उद्भव सम्बाद पुथि करिलन्त चाय ॥

“Then Sankaradeva attained the age of nineteen. He composed the book Uddhava Sambād while he got the tenth canto of the Bhāgavata Purāna.”

The following piece is quoted from the Uddhava Sambād to show the nature of its writing.

कृष्णर भक्ति आति नचाबे आचार जाति

जगतरे महा हितकर ।

येन अमृत पाइले येइ सेइ मते खाइले

सबे हय अजर अमर ॥

“Undivided devotion unto Krishna observes no distinction between customs and castes. It is very beneficial to the universe. Just as nectar, when obtained and taken in whatever form, results in eternal rejuvenation and immortality.”

(2) *The Kirtan*—It is a book of recitative prayer in verse delineating various metric measures such as pada, dulari, chhabī and jumuri. It contains teachings and philosophy of Neo-Vaishnavite cult. Its sources are the anecdotes recounted in the Bhāgavatapurāṇa, the Brahmapurāṇa and the Padmapurāṇa. It depicts the character of Sri-krishna in the main. Its language is simple, lucid, and its style is chaste and full of literary beauties. Its divisions of verses begin with a Ghosā—a burden,—sung in chorus and followed by rhymed couplets called pada, chhavi etc. The Ghosā contains, in epitomised form, solemn and sublime thoughts of vaishnavism and the

subsequent verses explain the ideas in the Ghosā, celebrating some characteristic of the life of Srikrishnā relating to the doctrine of Sankaradeva. It begins with a description of the different forms of God's incarnation, and the subsequent chapters are Nāmaparadha, Pāsanda-mardana. Dhyāna-varnan, Ajamilopakhyana, Prahlāda-charit, Gajendra-upakhyana, Hara-mohan, Balichalan, Sisulila, Rasakrira, Kansa-badha, Gopee-uddhava Sambād, Kunji-bancha-purana, Akrura-bāñchā-purana, Jarāsandha-judha, Kālajavana-badh, Muchkunda-stuti, Syamantaharan, Nārada-Krishna-darsana, Bipra-putra-anyana, Vedastuti, Leelamala, Srikrishna-baikunthaprayana, Sahasra-nama-brittanta, Oressa-varnan, Ghunuchā. Amongst these chapters Sahasra-nāma-brittanta was composed by Ratnakar Kandali and Ghunucha by Sridhara Kandali.

Sankaradeva began the composition of the Kirtana while he was nineteen years old and completed it at the last stage of his life. The manuscript in parts was left scattered. At last all its parts were collected by Rāmcharan Thakura, a biographer of Sankaradeva at the bidding of Mādhavadēva.

All the principles and intricacies involved in

his faith have been fully 'treated in his kirtan. The four main objects of his faith namely Guru, Deva, Nama and Bhakata have been dealt with, with full justification. The process of attaining devotion and chanting psalms have been delineated with their full significance.

Sankaradeva opens his Kirtan with a homage to the Supreme Being :

प्रथमे प्रणामो ब्रह्मरूपी सनातन ।

सर्व्व अवतार कारण नारायण ॥

“At the outset I bow down to Narayana the eternal one in the form of Brahma, the cause of all incarnations.”

The following few lines show its characteristic :

घोषा—त्राहि गोपाल कृपाल स्वामी ।

मजिलो भव जलधित आमि ॥

पद— एक मने शुना हरिर ध्यान ।

बैकुण्ठ नामे आछे महा थान ॥

शारि, शारि रख्खे बिमान चर्य ।

बैद्वर्य्य हीरा मरकत मय ॥

चन्द्र सूर्य्य येन प्रकाशे आति ।

नजानि यात पशि दिन राति ॥

चारु सरोवर निर्मल जल ।

सुगन्धि पद्म शोभे उत्तपल ॥

It is said in the Ghosā—“Oh merciful Lord Gopal! I am merged in the ocean of the world, save me from it”.

The idea of the Lord with its abode is elucidated in the pada: “Attend, what is meditation of Lord Hari. There is a superior sphere called Baikuntha. There are rows of chariots. It is full of sapphires, diamonds, and emeralds glittering like the sun and the moon without any distinction of day and night. Beautiful are tanks with transparent water decorated with scented lotus and lily.”

The following verses say regarding the result of chanting the nāmas of God—Hari :

घोषा—घोषियो हरि, हृदि रूप धरि, घोषियो हरि ।

नाहि आन पुन्य नामक सरि ॥

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पद— प्रथमे दहिबे पातक चय ।

करिबे महा पुण्य अभ्युदय ॥

कराबे बिषयत बिरकति ।

कृष्णते बाढ़िबे प्रेम भकति ॥

ओपज्जाइबे आति बैष्णव ज्ञान ।

मायाक करिबे दहि निर्य्याण ॥

चैतन्य मूर्ति पुर्णानन्द हरि ।

थैबेक तेन्ते एरे एक करि ॥

“Chant Hari, meditating upon His form at heart, chant Hari. There is no other great virtue than Nāma”—says, in the Ghosā. After chanting Hari the following results are to be obtained, says in the pada :

At first it will burn up all sins; then it generates great virtue; it creates aversion to worldly affairs; love for Srikrishna will increase; it will beget the sense of Vaishnavism; it fuses out all the illusions; and it will unite the devotee with that Hari who is all consciousness and all-bliss.

The following few lines elucidate eternal, permanent and ever appealing idea to all :

समस्त भूतरे तुमि आछा हृदयत ।

तत्त्व नापाइ तोमाक बिचारे बाहिरत ॥

तुमिसे केबले सत्य मिछा सबे आन ।

जानि ज्ञानीगणे करे हृदयत ध्यान ॥

“Thou art in the heart of all beings. People search for Thee out-side in ignorance. Thou art the only truth and all the rest are false. Knowing this the wise meditate upon Thee within their hearts.”

तोमासे अंश आमि यत जोबजाक ।

“We all creatures are particles of Thee”.

दानेसे दुर्गति सबे हरे ।

Sacrifice burns all afflictions.

तुमि सत्य ब्रह्म, तोमाते प्रकाशे, जंगत इटो अनन्त ।

जगतते सदा, तुमियो प्रकाशा, अन्तर्यामी भगबन्त ॥

“Thou art the eternal Brahma. The endless universe manifests in Thee. The knower of the heart, Thou manifestest ever in the universe”.

Thus in the Kirtana, full exposition of the Neo-Vaisnavite cult, has been provided. Its style and beauties of language hold a unique position in the literary sphere as does the Elizabethan literature in Europe. In short it may be called an epic embodying teachings of all aspects of human life towards the approachment of final beatitude.

(3) *The Bhāgavata Purāna*—The special poetical faculty of Sankaradeva in translating Sanskrit scriptures, quite in conformity with the text keeping ideas, thoughts, descriptions, spirits, dictions, style, and strength of the original in tact, is artistically and marvellously displayed in his Bhāgavata work. His choice of words and expression of feeling are found exquisitely charming and beautiful. He translated the first, second, third, sixth, eighth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth cantos of the Bhagavata purāna of which Dasama the tenth—canto is his master piece.

The following verses will show his dexterity in translation :

A scene of Kaliadaman illustrated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇ in its old Pūthi form.

सत्यव्रतं सत्यपरं त्रिसत्यं सत्यस्य योनिं निहितञ्च सत्ये ।
सत्यस्य सत्यं मृतं सत्यनेत्रं सत्यात्मिकं त्वां शरणं प्रपन्नाः ॥

(Tenth canto Bhagavatapurāṇa)

तुमि सत्यव्रत, मोक्षर साधन, सर्वकाले थाका स्वामी ।
महा पञ्चभूत, तोमाते ओपजे, तुमि सर्व अन्तर्यामी ॥
सृष्टिरो अन्तत, तुमि मात्र थाका, समताक प्रवर्त्ताइ ।
तोमार चरणे, पशिलो शरणे, तुमि बिने गति नाइ ॥

(Assamese version of the above sloka)

The following few lines are quoted to illustrate the rainy season displaying simile and metaphor :

सूर्यर मण्डले करे विविध प्रकाश ।
तार रश्मि चिकिमिकि करय आकाश ॥
बहे खर्व बायु नुशुनय मात बोल ।
गगणक ढाकि महा मेघर आन्दोल ॥
घने घने देइ आति बिजुली चमक ।
लागि तिरिमिरि आसि चक्षुत जमक ॥
नाकलय चन्द्र सूर्य ज्योति तारागण ।
येन जीव आत्मा शरीरत भैलाछन्न ॥

“The sphere of the sun exhibits various hues. The rays of the sun glitter in the sky. Gusts of air blow and nothing can be heard. Large clouds low covering the sky. Lightning flashes very

frequently. Its sparkles dazzle the eyes. The sun, the moon, and the stars become invisible, just as the soul is enveloped within the body”.

(4) *The Rukmini haran*—It deals with the events of the marriage of Rukmini, the daughter of Bhismaka, with Krishna of Dwaraka. Bhismaka was the king of the territory on the bank of Dikkarbasini, the easternmost boundary of Kāmārupa. This book gives us vivid description and an idea of the Assamese customs in connection with wedding. The following few lines depict the disappointment that reigns in the mind of a bride when it is apprehended that the bridegroom may not find her after his selection.

काय बाक्य मने मइ तोमारेसे भाय्या हैबो
 मोहोक नेनोक शिशुपाले ।
 प्रमत्त सिंह आगे बँटा थैया आछे येन
 नहरोक अधम शृगाले ॥
 जरासन्ध आदि करि यतेक नृपति आछे
 तोमारि आगत येन वृण ।
 प्रचण्ड बाघर आगे येन गाव घेलावय
 अन्नि क्षुद्र मृग ये हरिण ॥

“Let not Sisupala have me. I am your mate with all my heart and soul. The object of prize has been placed before a mighty lion. Let it not be

taken away by a wretched jackal. In your presence, Jarasandha and other kings look like straw. They resemble tiny deer roaming in front of a mighty tiger”.

(5) *The Anadi patan*—It contains the history of the creation of the universe. Its source is the third Canto of the Bhāgavata purāna. Some idea of creation is given below :

वायु हन्ते रूप नामे पुत्र अवतार ।
 रूपरं तनय भैला अग्नि चमतकार ॥
 अग्निर पुत्र भैला रस महामति ।
 रस गुण हन्ते पाछे जल उत्पति ॥
 जले उत्पति भैला गन्ध गुण नाम ।
 गन्ध गुण हन्ते बसुमती अनुपम ॥

“From Air is begotten Rupa (form). Glittering Fire comes out of Form. Mighty Rasa (moisture) issues from fire. Water comes out of moisture. Flavour generates from water. Flavour originates the beautiful Earth (Basumati).” •

(6) *The Bali-chalan*—It deals with the anecdote of Vishnu in the form of Bamana while he begs alms from king Bali. At the end of the great sacrifice, Bali offered gifts to every body to his heart's content. Vishnu disguised as a Brāhmana comes to ask for gifts. He wanted only space

enough for three steps. Bali gladly and proudly granted the prayer. Accordingly Bāmana stretched one of his steps on to the heaven, another over the earth and to rest the third one, no space was found, so Bali humbled down and Bāmana placed his third step on his head. Thus Bāmana occupied all the possessions of Bali placing his three steps. So Bali has been deprived of all his possessions. This shows pride must have a fall.

The following passage gives some idea of it :

मोर प्रयोजन आबे शुना राजा तुमि ।
 मागो मइ दिया मोक तिनि पद भूमि ॥
 मोहोर भरिर जोखा करि दिया दान ।
 एहिसे प्रार्थना करौ न लागय आन ॥

“Oh king, listen to my wants. I beg only three steps of land. Please grant me the gift of space just to cover my three steps. I pray this and nothing else.”

(7) *Harishchandra Upakhyan*—It deals with the story of king Harishchandra, who gave up all his possessions to keep his words. It depicts a picture of firm and resolute morality and fulfilment of promise even at the cost of life. The following few lines describe a pathetic and heart-

rending scene while Harishchandra gave up his wife and son as promised :

करन्त क्रन्दन पृथिवीत परे लुटि ।

किबा चाइ आछो प्राण केने नयाइ फुटि ॥

हा पुत्र भार्या बुलि हिये हाने मुठि ।

ढात ढात माटित परन्त उठि उठि ॥

हृदयर मांस काटि कोने लया याय ।

करन्त क्रन्दन तासम्बाक चाइ चाइ ॥

“He cried rolling on the ground. What for do I live? Why does not my life go out? He beat his breast with his fist and said “Alas my son! Alas my wife!” He rolled and rolled on the ground frequently. “Look at them”, he cried and said “Ah, my flesh has been punched away from my heart”.

(8) *The Rāmāyana, Uttarākanda*—It is a typical translation from the Sanskrit text. The following few lines express the sorrow of Sita while she was banished.

एहि बुलि जानकी कान्दन्त मकमकि ।

शोकानले हियार नुगुचे भकभकि ॥

नयनर लोतक धाराये याय बहि ।

अधोमुखे कतोक्षणे आछिलन्त रहि ॥

• गुचोक आमार इटो कलङ्क ललाट ।

पातालत पशौ बसुमती मेला फाट ॥

“Saying thus Janaki cried bitterly. The heart’s inflammation did not cease. Tears flow in channel on the ground. She stayed for a time with her face downward. Let this scandal of mine be blotted out. Oh mother earth! make a split so that I may enter into the region underneath”.

(9) *Guna-mālā*—It enumerates the attributes of Vishnu. It is an abridged version of the entire Bhāgavata purāna like the Uddhava Sambād. It is one of the finest compositions displaying the unrivalled poetic abilities of the author. Its language is very sonorous and has a natural flow. It can easily be recited and remembered. Its ideas are so well arranged with proper gradation of intonation that it appeals to the heart of all.

The following few verses are quoted from it :

ब्रह्माये प्रार्थन्ते, आसि भगवन्ते ।

जन्मिला ज्वलन्ते, दैवकीत हन्ते ॥

अद्भूत बालक, कुटिल अलक ।

रत्नर तिलक, शोभे कपोलक ॥

हसित वयन, कमल नयन ।

रुचिर दशन, पीत बसन ॥

किरीटि कुण्डल, करे मलमल ।

कौस्तुभे उज्ज्वल, शोभे कम्बुगल ॥

“At the prayer of Brahmā, God took His glorious birth from Daivakee. He is a miraculous boy with curls of hair and decorated with precious mark printed on the forehead. He has a smiling face, lotus eyes, charming teeth and yellow garb. His head dress and ear-rings glitter. His conch-like neck brightens with a divine neck-lace.”

(10) *Rāma-Mālīka*—It elucidates the meaning of the Bhiakti—devotion. In it abstract ideas are expressed by examples. The following few lines show its characteristics :

इहार दृष्टान्त शुना सामाजिक जन ।

गुरुकं सागर कहे नामेसे रतन ॥

हीरा रत्न भक्तक बोले देखा आके ।

शामुक बुलिया कैलो आन देवताके ॥

“O the Assembly! here is its illustration. The preceptor is called the ocean, and nāma is its jewel. Among the jewels diamond is the devotee and minor gods are nothing but shells”.

In one verse, the following meaning of the metre called Dulari, is given :

दुर्लभ आनन्द मिले इहाक स्मरणे ।

तातेसे दुलरीं बोले शुना एकमणे ॥

“Rare delight can be attained by its recollection, so it is called Dulari.”

(11) *Amrita-manthan*—It is composed on the theme of churning of Nectar out of the ocean. In worshipping the Lord of lords, he says :

चारि वेदे चारिभूज समुद्रे उदर ।

जगतके व्यापिया आङ्गाहा कलेवर ॥

अंशे अवतरि करा सृष्टिक पालन ।

त्राहि त्राहि हरि हुयो आमात प्रसन्न ॥

“The four Vedas are Thy four arms; the ocean is Thy stomach. Thy body pervades through out the world. Thou protectest the universe by the partial incarnation. Savest me Thou, Oh Lord and be propitiated.

(12) *Bhakti-pradipa*—It deals with the kernal of Bhakti cult. It prefers Bhakti to Vedic rites and sacrifices. The following few lines show that Bhakti has been given the preferential treatment in practising religious path in order to achieve salvation :

नपाओँ अन्त कहि महाभक्तिर गुण ।

जानि मोर भक्तिक धरियो अर्जुन ॥

भक्तित परे गति दाता नाइ आन ।

बेद शिरोरत्न मन्त्रे इहार प्रमाण ॥

“I (Srikrishna) can not make an end of saying the virtue of Bhakti. Realising this Oh Arjuna!

practise Bhakti unto Me. There is no sound means of salvation other than Bhakti. It is ascertained by the essential part of the Vedas."

(13) *Gupta-mani*—It is a treasure of all knowledge needed for culturing Bhakti cult. It is an epitome of religious interpretation of all concerning Vaishnavism. In one of its places it has been said :

राम नामे परमात्मा जानिबा निश्चय ।

कृष्ण नामे जीवआत्मा प्रकाश आछय ॥

"Oh people! know it certain that Rama nāma reveals Paramatmā and Krishna nāma Jivatmā."

(14) *Nimi-Nava-Siddha-Sambād*—It deals with the religious discussion held by nine eminent sages with King Nimi. It says in one place :

शुना सभासद यत

बुझिया कथार तत्त्व

साधु सङ्गे करियोँक रति ।

यत मन करा बृथा

महन्तर मुखे कथा

शुनि करा कृष्णत भक्ति ॥

"Oh people! realising the inward truth of spiritual instruction take delight in the company of divines. Whatever you think is vain, considering this engross yourself to devotion to Krishna under the guidance of a Mahanta, the religious instructor."

(15) *Janma-nirnaya*—It deals with the creation of the world.

(16) *Utkala-mala*—It gives an idea of divine sport on the sacred precincts of Purusottama Kshetra—Puri.

(17) *Vaisnava Amrit*—It contains the essence of main principles of Vaisnavism.

(18) *Prem Kalaha Kirtan*—It deals with the events concerning Krishna's amorous hitches with his consort Rukmini.

(19) *Brahma Geeta*—It describes the attributes and abode of Brahma the Supreme Being.

(20) *Bhakti Ratnakara* (Sanskrit)—It has been written in Sanskrit. It contains the philosophy of Vaisnavism. It reveals the essence of Vaishnava tenet with its rites, ceremonies, customs, usages and festivals. It shows the mastery of Sankaradeva over Sanskrit language. It has been rendered into Assamese by Ram Charan Thakur. •

THE POETICAL WORKS OF MĀDHAVADEVĀ.

(1) *Nama Ghosa*—It is a scripture of explanatory recitation of the Vaisnavite cult expounded by Sankaradeva. It emphatically announces that no salvation is obtainable without devotion to God

and chanting of his Nāmas. Its main feature is chanting Nāmas hence it means repetition of Namas. It contains one thousand verses so it is called Hāzāri Ghosā also. It is well arranged with various metrical measures. In thoughts, in language, in metaphorical expositions and in mode of delineation it holds a unique position in Assamese; nay it is quite competent to cope with the world literature.

The following few quotations from this scripture will show its exalted merits :

(1)

तिनि गुणमय, यत ज्ञान कर्म, केवल बन्ध कारण ।

जानि आक तेजि, एकान्त भक्ति, भजियो कृष्ण चरण ॥

“All knowledge and activity involved in three qualities are causes of bondage, Knowing this give up all these and worship lord Krishna with absolute devotion.”

(2)

सन्त उपदेशे हरि चरणे भजियो ।

हरिनाम निरमल आनन्दे मजियो ॥

“Following the advice of the preceptor worship the feet of Hari. The name Hari is pure; engross yourself in that pure delight.”

(3)

प्रकृति पुरुष दुइरो नियन्ता माधव ।

समस्तरे आत्मा हरि परम बान्धव ॥

“Hari is the Supreme Benefactor who is the ruler of soul and nature and spirit of all.”

(4)

तर्क शस्त्र महाव्याघ्री ताहार निपुन पति

तार शिष्य भैल पुत्र प्राय ।

संसार बनत पशि पति पुत्र समन्विते

उपनिषत् धेणु धरि स्वाय ।

“The art of reasoning is like a mighty tigress. Her husband is one who is an expert in reasoning and her son is her disciple. Both father and son entering into the world devour the cow in the form of Upanisada.”

(5)

पुन्य अरन्यर माभे माधवर नाम सिंह

प्रकाश करय अति बडे ।

यार ध्वनि शुनि भये महापाप हस्तीचय

पलाइ अति त्रासते लवडे ॥

“In the forest of virtue the name of Madhava proclaims itself prominently as the roar of a lion, at which vicious sins fly away in great terror like wild elephants.”

(6)

एकेखानि मात्र शास्त्र निष्ठ दैवकी नन्दने कैला याक
 देबो एकमात्र दैवकी देवीर सूत ।
 दैवकी पुत्रर पद सेवा कर्मो एक एहिमाने मात्र
 मन्त्रो एक तान नाम मात्र अद्भूत ॥

“The true scripture is the one pronounced by the son of Daivaki; the only deity is the son of Devakidevi; the only work is the service at the feet of the son of Daivaki; the only incantation is His miraculous Nāma.”

Bhakti Ratnāvali—It deals with the elements of Bhakti in figurative language. In one place he says :

येन सुवर्णर धातु मिश्रमल यत ।
 केवले बह्मिसे ताक हरय समस्त ॥
 सेहिमते योगीरो चित्तर यतमल ।
 विष्णुसे हरन्त ताक जानिवा सकल ॥

Gist—As mixed up gold is purified by fire so the heart of the yogee is sanctified by the nāma of Vishnu.

This *Bhakti Ratnāvali* was translated from the Sanskrit one of Vishnupuri. Madhavadeva made its Assamese version while he was at Patboushi with his preceptor. Regarding its composition there is a legend behind it.

Once a Brāhman scholar named Kanthabhusan was defeated by Sankaradeva in a debate and as such he went to Kasi in order to acquire knowledge more. He began to study Sastras under Brahmānanda a disciple of Vishnupuri. One day the teacher and the taught were discussing about various meanings of a sloka of the Bhāgavata Purāna. While Kanthabhusana found his teacher in doubt, he made an attempt to clear out its meaning by reciting some verses of Assamese version of Sankaradeva's Bhāgavata Purāna. The very name of Sankaradeva reminded Brahmānanda about a box containing a copy of Bhakti Ratnavali left with him by his Guru. As instructed by his Guru, Brahmānanda sent the book to Sankaradeva through Kanthabhusan. Under the instruction of Sankaradeva, Madhavadeva made Assamese version of the Sanskrit Ratnavali.

(3) *Rājsuya*—It is an exposition of some Srikrishna's daily life showing victory of morality and virtue. Here descriptive passages are very charming; the following is one of them :—

करय प्रकाश दिव्य सभा मनोहर ।

निज कान्ति करे निन्दि ज्योति आदित्य ॥

“There shines the splendid heavenly assembly and he displays his own brilliancy surpassing the beauty of the rays of the sun.”

(4) *Adikanda Rāmayana*—It is a chaste translation work from the Sanskrit book. The beauty of Sita is described in a few lines :—

सीतार मुखर कान्ति दशोदिशे प्रकाशन्ति
येन पूर्ण चन्द्रर उदय ॥

“The beauty of Sita displays on all sides like that of the full moon.”

(5) *Nāma-malikā*—It shows triumph of chanting the Nāma of Hari. He says :—

महामेष मात्र माधवर नामचय ।
ताहार छायात बिटो प्रवेश होबय ॥
महामोह बह्नि आरु ताहाङ्क नदहे ।
ताप दुख एराइ महा सुखी हुया रहे ॥

“The nāmas of Mādhava are like the shadow of a great cloud. The flame of great illusion cannot burn him who takes shelter under it. Such a one attains great happiness being free from all sorrows and sufferings.”

(6) *Amulya-Ratna*—It deals with the creation of the world and object of devotion and knowledge. His description of the universe begins with the following lines :—

आछे सात द्वीप सागरर चारि काषे ।
सातखान सागरे सबाको बेढि आछे ॥

“There are seven islands on all sides of the ocean and the whole universe is encircled with seven oceans.”

DRAMATIC WORKS OF SANKARADEVA

Introduction—The creation of the dramatic works is a new element introduced into the literary sphere by Sankaradeva in Assam. The dramas are written with a view to infuse ideas of God's action and to inculcate lessons on supremacy of devotional and pious life into the hearts of all people by actual performances. In his poetical works the author elucidates the ideas of God's attributes but in his dramatic works he visualises those attributes. His dramas generally represent mysterious and miraculous ways of Krishna's life. The plots of his dramas are eventually taken from the great two epics of Hindus but his masterly hand is displayed in delineating the characters individually and severally.

The language of his drama unlike that of his poetry is a mixed one. It is blending of Vrajabali, Kamarupee, Sanskrit and Maithily. He introduces lucid prose style in his drama in dialectic form. His drama begins with a prayer. The Sutradhara, the inter-locutor in the prelude

to the drama and to each scene of the drama commences the stage work. He is the interpreter of versions used in drama. His dramas are written in one act and hence they are commonly called Ankia-nāt. He used painted scenes in his dramatic performances. He painted these scenes with designs personally. This use of scene had been introduced in Kamrupa in 1468 A.D., before it had been used in other parts of the world. In Europe it has been traced out that scenes were not used earlier than the seventeenth century. Hence such an innovation is a unique thing for Assam.

Relation of his drama with others—In Sanskrit dramas the Sutradhara speaks in Sanskrit and other minor and female actors speak in Prakrit. In the earliest plays of the twelfth century, it has been traced out that two different languages were used in plays. In English dramas the chief actors speak in French or in Latin but minor and female actors speak in English. Sankaradeva deviating from this prevailing course, used mixed Assamese language in his dramas for all actors and actresses.

Sankaradeva's plays begin with Nandi the prayer of benediction composed in Sanskrit and sometimes in Assamese also. The Nandi is recited by the Sutradhara unlike in Sanskrit plays. Then

other actors as arranged appear in time from the Cho-ghar (green room). Apart from the actual actors and actresses two other players are introduced in the stage—one is called Duta—a herald and the other Bahua—a clown. They are to explain the cause and object of interruption in course of performance. Besides the Bahua removes monotony by his jesture and posture like the clowns of Elizabethan stage. The players are painted, and painted masks are also used by them. These paints were prepared by the author personally so as to keep the traditional significance with different colours.

Four elements of the drama—One of the most striking characteristics of Sankaradeva's dramas is combination of four elements—song, dance, dialogue and musical appliances. The songs used in drama are generally called Bhatimas. The dance keeps the harmony of rhythmic presentation. The dialogue keeps the significance of rolls of the players. The appliances keep the tal, man, and laya in conformity with the subject-matter, song and dance. The Bhatimas (psalms) with peculiar tunes and modulation, the dance with dancers painted with special feature, and appliances made with distinction, reveal the social and religious aspects of the land and as such all these

four elements form an integral part of the religious and social life of the inhabitants of the land.

Sankaradeva composed several dramas but the following few are traced out up to date :

(1) *Chihna Jātrā*—It is the first drama of Sankaradeva and it was staged first with painted scene. He wrote this drama at the age of nineteen. Its name was so as its scenes were painted. It gives a description of Srikrishna with His abode Baikuntha, the heaven.

(2) *Kaliya-Damana*—It deals with the act of subduing the power of the great snake Kaliya resided in Kalia-lake. Krishna's juvenile playmates came up to the Kaliya-lake and drank its water. As soon as they drank the poisonous water, all fell senseless. Krishna with his miraculous healing power restored the life of his mates. Then he jumped into the water from a Kadama tree with a view to kill the snake. The snake was tortured and tortured and at last it breathed its last. However being propitiated by the consorts of the serpent Krishna restored the life of the snake.

(3) *Keligopal*—It depicts the act of winning the hearts of all the Gopies by Srikrishna with the melodious tune of his flute. The tune of the flute

appeals to the heart of Gopies at Brindavana. All the devoted hearts of the Gopies were possessed by Srikrishna with his multifarious forms. This omnipresent manifestation of Krishna shows that 'He is in the heart of one and all. He who is mad after Him is favoured by Him. This Keli-gopal Nat is called Raskrira also.

(4) *Patni-prasad*—It deals with the occasion of supplying of food by the Brāhman women while the male Brahmans being busy in ceremonial sacrifices refused to offer food (Anna) to Krishna when he felt tired of playing with His mates on the bank of the river Jamunā. For supplying food the wives of the Brāhman were favoured by Sri-Krishna. The occurrence of the Patni-prasad impressed the people with the superiority of Bhakti to sacrifices and ceremonial rites.

(5) *Ram-Vijay-Nāt*—It deals with the great event relating to the marriage of Sita with Ram after breaking of Siva's great bow known as "Ajagoba".

(6) *Rukmini-haran*—It deals with the event of marriage of Rukminidevi the daughter of Bhismaka the king of Kundilya. The daughter was to be given in marriage to Sisupala but at the time of Sayāmbara, Srikrishna snatched her away defeating all the suitors, to Dwaraka where formal

marriage was celebrated with great pomp and show.

(7) *Pārijat-haran*—It deals with the event of procuring the flower Pārijat from the divine garden of Indra at the request of Satyabhama a consort of Srikrishna. At first the Pārijat was brought by Nārada and it was given to Srikrishna who gave it to Rukmini. Nārada informed Satyabhamā about the gift of the flower. Satyabhamā being aggrieved at this persuaded Srikrishna to bring Pārijat again for her. Srikrishna cannot but promise to fulfil her desire. In the mean while Srikrishna was requested by gods to save them from the attack of Narakasura the king of Kāmarupa. Srikrishna at first went to kill Narakāsura and then came up to Indra who refused to offer Pārijat. Thereupon a great fight took place and at last Srikrishna secured the Pārijat and presented it to Satyabhamā who was accompanying Him all the time.

DRAMATIC WORKS OF MĀDHAVADEVA.

Following the foot-prints of his preceptor Mādhavadeva also composed several dramas of which the following eight copies have been traced out up to date :

(1) *Pipara-goochooah*—It deals with an aspect of Srikrishna's childhood activity relating to the

act of stealing butter. While being detected he defended himself by saying that he was removing ants from the butter-pots.

(2) *Chor-dharā*—It deals with the act of Srikrishna's stealing butter from the houses of Gopies while he was caught red-handed but he denied, charging the Gopies of the act.

(3) *Rasa-jhumurā*—It exhibits undivided and unprejudiced devotion of Gopees to Srikrishna during the time of Rāsakrirā.

(4) *Kotorā-khela*—It depicts Srikrishna's play with his mates with Kotorā, a kind of plaything.

(5) *Bhusan-Harooah*—It deals with the act of stealing Srikrishna's neck-lace by Gopees while they were in play mood.

(6) *Bhōjana-Vyavahara*—It deals with the event of Srikrishna's taking of meal with his friends while Brahmā stole away their cows.

(7) *Bhumi-lotooah*—It depicts the cleverness of the God-child while he was neglected by his mother and he played under pretext of besmearing his body with mud so that he might draw the attention of his mother.

(8) *Arjuna-Bhanjana*—It deals with the act of breaking of Arjuna trees by struggle of Sri-

krishna while he was tied to a pounding machine by his mother for his offence of stealing curd-pots from the Gopees' house.

Quotations from drama—The following passages are quoted from some of the dramas to give an idea of the language and characteristics of the dramas :

(1) *Rāsakrira*—

सूत्र—शरच्छशाङ्क कर कोमालासु,
निशासु पश्यत् सह गोपिकाभिः ।
चकार केलिं कलगीत कन्ठः
स गोपसु नुर्जयतीह कृष्णः ॥

* * *

सुहाइ एकतालि
शरत् शशी निशि धवली अधिक ।
लहु लहु मलय पवन तथि थिक ॥
बिरिन्दा बिपिन कुसुम परकाश ।
पेसि करल रास केलि बिलास ॥
जय जय गोपी नाथ करो पस्नाम ।
पुरन कय केलि गोपिनी काम ॥
पञ्चम पूरि पुनु गावत गीत ।
मोहित हुयो ब्रज मोहित चित ॥
हरशि चेतन मन मनसिज बान ।
कृष्ण किङ्कर एह शङ्कर भान ॥

(नान्द्यन्ते सूत्रधार प्रवेश । अलमति बिस्तरेण । प्रथमतः
माधवो माधवो त्युक्ता हरिं प्रणम्य सभासद् जनानां प्रत्याह)

सूत्र—भो भो सभासद् युयं शृनुत सावधानतः ।
केलि गोपाल नामेदं नाटकं मुक्ति साधकम् ॥

भटिमा

परम पुरुष पुरातन पापी पावन ईश्वर देव ।
ब्रह्मा रुद्र आदि दिगपाल यासु करत नित सेव ॥

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सूत्र—भो भो सभासद् ये सकले सुरासुर बन्धित पादपद्म,
सकल संसार याकेर सजना याकेरि नामे महापापी सब संसार
निसुरे सोहि परमेश्वर श्रीश्री गोपाल सकल गोपीजन सहित
ओहि सभा मध्ये परम कौतुके नृत्य करब । सावधाने देखह
शुनह । (आकाशे कर्ण दत्ता) आहे सङ्गी कि बाद्य बजावत ।

सङ्गी—सखि देव दुन्दुभि बाजत । आः मिलल ।

अथ प्रवेशमकरोत् कृष्णः कन्दर्पदर्पहा ।

मोहयन् बादयन् वेणु स्त्रीभिः सह सकौतुकी ॥

भो सभासद्जन ! गोपीजन सहिते श्रीगोपाल ए आवत
ए आवत थिक ।

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श्रीकृष्ण (बिहसि बोलल)—तोरार पतिपुत्र, पितामाता, भ्राता सब तोराक भेट नपाइ परम चिन्तित ह्याछे । तासम्बार अति सत्बरे भय दूर गया । विलम्बक योग्य नहे । ऐ चलह ।

गोपी सब परिहास नाहि बुजल । कृष्णक कटाक्षे कोपे गज्जये लागल ।

सूत्र—दृष्टा वनं विकसितं शीतलं शशि शोभितम् ।

यमुना जलवातेन प्रतियात बनात् द्रुतम् ॥

कृष्ण—हे सखि सब ? यदि वृन्दावन देखिते आवल विकसित वृन्दावन देखल । अब सत्वर चलह । ऐ चलह ।

Bhumi Lootoah Nat—

गीत—भाटियालि—एकतालि

भूमि लुटि कान्दे गोपीनाथ भाण्डिते मावरे ।

चुरि करिया खीर लवनु खावे भान्ड निजरे ॥

सूत्र—ऐचन क्रन्दन पेखि यशोबा पुत्र स्नेहे परम आकुल हुया पुछत ।

यशोदा—आहे बालक ! तुहो कि निमित्ते माटि लोटि क्रन्दन करह ।

श्रीकृष्ण—आहे मायि यशोदे ! ओहि भान्डके मध्ये नवलबनि थैयाछिलो, ताहेक हे निया गेल । ओहि भान्ड मध्ये घन खीर थैयाछिलो ताहेक केबा खाइलेक ।

पद

केबा निया खाइले मोर ए नव लवनि ।

ओहि बुलि हुमहुमिं कान्दे यदुमनि ॥

धन खीर फुटि थैयाछिलो तारो गेला खाया ।

ओहि बुलि कान्दे काणु भान्डटि गड़ाया ॥

श्रीकृष्ण—आहे मायि ! हामु कि कहब । हामार परम सुन्दर वंशी एखाने थैयाछिलो । ताहेके लैया गेल । आर हामार कि हैते रहल ।

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सूत्र—ओहि बुलि जगतक ईश्वर श्रीकृष्ण मावक भान्डिये माटि लोटि क्रन्दन कय रोष करिये रहल । ताहे पेखि यशोदा पुत्र स्नेहे नानाविध काकुति करिये यीचे शान्त करिते लागल ता देखह ।

PROSE COMPOSITION.

Prose in dialogues—The dialect such as—

“हे स्वामि कृष्ण ! कोटि ब्रह्मान्डेश्वर परम पुरुष पुरुषोत्तम तुहु जगत गुरु । तोहाक द्रोह करिये पापी पुत्र नरक निज पापे नाश गेल । ताहे पुत्र ओहि भगदत्त नातिक तोहारि पावे समर्पल । आहेक रक्षा करह । आमार सन्तति रहोक । तोहारि चरण पङ्कजे कातर कय अभय प्रसाद मागो गोसाबि ॥”

used in dramas exhibits the old type of Assamese prose in the 16th century. This dialectic prose

style may be called the first and foremost of its kind.

Prose puthi—Later * on Bhattadeva, the devoted disciple of Dāmodaradeva, translated the Bhāgavata purana and the Geetā in prose, at the inspiration of his preceptor; called Kathā-Bhāgavata and Kathā-Geetā. In translating these two Sastras he keeps the spirit and strength of the original. The following passages show their characteristics :

Kathā-Bhāgavata—

शुक कहन्त, जाना राजा, देखन सब्ब
गुणयुक्त परम शोभन काल हैल, तेखने भगवन्त देवकीत
आर्विभाव हैला, येन पूर्वदिशत चन्द्र देखा दिला । तेखने
रोहिणी नैक्षेत्र मिलिल । ग्रहगणो शान्त हैल । दशोदिश
प्रसन्न पड़िल । निर्मल नैक्षेत्र हैल, पृथिवीतो स्थाने स्थाने
मङ्गल करिल । नदीरो प्रसन्न जल हैल, हृदतो पद्म फुलिल,
शीत सुगन्ध बायुयो बहिल ।

Kathā-Geetā—

धृतराष्ट्रे सञ्जयत प्रश्न करन्त हे सञ्जय !
मोर पुत्र सब पान्डुपुत्र सबो धर्मभूमि कुरुक्षेत्रत युद्धक इच्छाये
मिलित हुया कि कर्म करिले ताक मोत कहां । अर्जुन बोलन्त
हे मधुसुदन !, मइ कातरे युद्ध एरिलो इ नहे ; किन्तु अन्याय
देखिहे निवर्तिलो ।

Thus Bhattadeva was the pioneer of using prose style in composing Assamese puthis in the 16th century while such prose composition was very rare in other Indian vernaculars.

BARGEETS.

Introduction—The songs of Sankaradeva are playing an essential part of his literature. These songs are commonly called Bargeet. They are so many psalms, hymns containing lofty idea of attributes of Lord Srikrishna, with philosophical aspects of Vaisnavite cult. They are full of poetic charm and are written in various metres with appropriate Ragas, keeping musical times (tal) all round. The refrain is called Dhrung (Dhura) and the subsequent verses are called Pada. Most of the Bargeets are composed in mixed language of Brajabali, Maithily and Prachin Kāmarupee. Special musical appliances have been made to keep the tune of Burgeets such as Khol, tal, khutital, khanjuri, Benu and the like. Several Ragas also have been introduced such as Ashowari, Dhansiri, Gouri, Sree, Kedar, Basanti, Suhai, Ahir and the like. Some of these Ragas resemble to some extent the Samavedic Ragas. The melodious tune and modulation of the sweet Ragas of these Bargeets harmonising with their befitting musical

appliances awaken the tune within the heart of hearers with religious and pious feeling. In these Bargeets the authors reveal the doctrine of Vaishnavism in several channels of culture such as Jnāna yoga, Bhakti yoga, Dāśya, Sakhya, Madhura Batsalya and so on.

Popularly it has been said that there are two hundred and forty Bargeets in Assamese out of which one hundred ninety seven have been traced out. Sankaradeva wrote forty-one Bargeets; Madhavadeva wrote one hundred fifty-four; Ram Charan Thakur wrote one and Daityari Thakur one.

Examples—The following two Bargeets of those have been cited herein to show the language and characteristics of them :

रग धनश्री.

ध्रुं—नारायण ! काहे भक्ति करो० तेरा ।

मेरि पामर मन माधव घन घन

घातुक पाप नाछोरा ॥

पद—यत जीव जङ्गम कीट पतङ्गम

अग नग जगतेरि काया । ”

सब कहु मारि पुरत ओहि उदर

नाहि करत भूत दाया ॥

ईश स्वरूपे हरि सब घटे बैठह
 यैचन गगण बियापि ।
 निन्दाबाद पै शुण्य हिंसा हरि
 तेरि करोँ हो हामु पापी ॥
 काकू शङ्कर कय करहु करुणा नाथ
 योनो छारहोँ रामबाणी ।
 सब अपराधक बाधक तुवा नाम
 ताहे शरण लेहोँ जानि ॥

“Oh Lord Nārāyana ! how can my obeisance be unto you ? Oh lord Mādhava my villainous mind often stoops to atrocious sins. The whole universe including all moving beings, worms, insects, birds, trees and mountains is in you ; yet all these are killed and devoured having no mercy to your created beings. As the sky pervades all over, so you prevail in every being in the form of spirit or soul ; yet I, the sinful, indulge in sarcasm malignity, and envy. Hence Sankara implored “Oh Lord ! be merciful that I never foresake the name of Rāma. Realising that nāma is the antidote against all evils, I surrender to Thee.

राग अहिर

ध्रु—उठ उठ बापु चान्द बयन ।

• यशोवा मावे डाके घन घन ॥

पद—लहु लहु बहे मलया बाध ।
 कोकिले तेजे सुललित राव ॥
 रवि परशने तिमिर नाशि ।
 सङ्गहि बालक सब मिलल आसि ॥
 दधि दुग्ध घृत व्यञ्जन भाते ।
 पाश्वनी शिङ्गा वेतुवेणु हाते ॥
 गो बत्सपाल लेह सङ्गे करि ।
 उठ गोष्ठे चल ठाकुर मेरि ॥
 यशोवाक बाणी श्रुनिये हृषीकेश ।
 बालक सङ्गे गोष्ठे परवेश ॥
 दीन माधवे कह्य परमान ।
 हरि भिने नाहि तारक आन ॥

Mother Josodah calls repeatedly "Oh Moon-faced One! get up, get up. The fragrant breeze blows swiftly. The cuckoo chirps melodiously. Darkness disappears at the touch of the sun. All the playmates meet together with curd, milk, clarified butter, curry, rice, conch, horn and flute in their hands. Get up Oh my darling! proceed to the pasture land and take calves with you. Hearing this message of Jasodah, Hrishikesha entered into the pasture land. Poor Mādhava proclaims there is no rescue but Hari.

BHATIMĀ.

Sankaradeva as well as Mādhavadeva composed a kind of hymn with special feature in rhymed verses of four lines elucidating the praises of God, preceptor or kings.

(1) Praises of God—

ब्रह्मा महेश्वर, याकर चाकर, ताकर गुण मुहे लेहु ।

माधव बान्धव, साधव मुकुति, ताहे चरण चित्त देहु ॥

Utter his name whom Brahmā and Maheswar serve. To get salvation let the heart be surrendered to Mādhava the be-friender.

(2) Praises of preceptor—

जय गुरु शङ्कर, सर्व गुणाकर, याकेरि नाहि उपाम ।

तोहारि चरणक रेणू शत कोटि, बारेक करोहो प्रणाम ॥

Victor unto Sankara the preceptor, the repository of all attributes, with whom nothing can be compared. Let me bow down at the dust of your feet thousand times.

(3) Praises of a king—

आपन भूजबले, दण्डिये राजकुल, पावत सकल हि काय ।

जय जय ईश्वर, पाद प्रसाद, मल्लदेव कर राज ॥

You have attained all the attributes subduing the lines of kings by your power, Malladeva ! display

yourself, you are blessed with the grace of God.
Be victorious.

CHATIHA.

Chatiha is a kind of new verse in rhyme of which the lines begin with the successive letters of the alphabets and hence it consists of thirty six lines. Generally it is composed on revealing religious aspects. As for example—

कइ बोले—कलि युगे राम नाम सार ।
खइ बोले—खेने खेने करियो उचार ॥
गइ बोले—गर्ब न करिबा एको नर ।
घइ बोले—घने हरि घुषियो सत्त्वर ॥
ङइ बोले—लयो सङ्ग भक्त जनर ।
चइ बोले—चरित्र बलायो गोविन्दर ।
छइ बोले—चाण्डालको नामे शुध करे ॥
झइ बोले—थिटो नरे करे नामक यतन ।
ञइ बोले—ताङ्क निज पद देन्त नारायण ॥

Ka says—Nāma of Rama is the essence of the
Iron Age.

Kha says—Pronounce the Nāma often and again.

Ga says—Oh people! don't be proud.

Gha says—Proclaim the Nāma of Hari often.

Unga says—Keep the company of devotees.

Cha says—Describe the character of Govinda.

Chha says—Nāma of Hari purifies even the
Chndalas.

Ja says—Shout the victory of God.

Jha says—Take care of chanting the Nāma of
Hari.

Yna says—Then God Nārayana will offer you
shelter.

METRES USED IN COMPOSITION.

Sankaradeva has shown profound mastery in composing poems making ornamented with various forms of metres. He might be called the expounder of the Assamese metres. Some of his metres are unique and not available in the literature of other vernacular languages in India. Let some of his striking poetical measures be enumerated with their characteristics herein.

(1) *Pada*—It is a verse of two lines rhyming at the end containing fourteen syllables in each, *e.g.*

हरि भक्ति पथे महागीता भागवत ।

दुग्ध हुया स्रवे प्रेमे गुढ़ अर्थ यत ॥

(2) *Dulari*—It is a verse of six lines of which 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th contain six syllables, whereas 3rd and 6th contain eight syllables, rhyming at the end of 1st and 2nd and 4th and 5th and 3rd and 6th, *e.g.*

धर्म अर्थ काम, यिटो अभिलाषे, यि चावे मोक्षर पथ ।

सियो हरि नाम, कीर्त्तन करिसे, पावे सवे मनोरथ ॥

(3) *Chhabi*—It is a verse of 6 lines of which 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th contain 8 syllables and 3rd and 6th 10 syllables, rhyming at the end of 1st and 2nd, 4th and 5th; and 3rd and 6th, *e.g.*

यत देखा यत गुना यतेक मनत गुणा
 सवे मायामय स्वप्न सम ।
 समस्ते जगते हरि जानिबा निश्चय करि
 गुचायो बुद्धिर इदो भ्रम ॥

(4) *Lechari*—It is a verse of 6 lines of which 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th contain 10 syllables whereas 3rd and 6th contain 14 syllables, rhyming at the end of the 1st and 2nd; 4th and 5th; and 3rd and 6th, *e.g.*

परम दुब्बोध आत्म तत्त्व तार ज्ञान अर्थे हरि यत
 लीला अवतार धरा तुमि कृपामय ।
 ताहान चरित्र सुधा सिन्धु तात क्रीडां करि दीन बन्धु
 चारि पुरुषार्थ तृणर सम करय ॥

(5) *Jhumuri*—It is a rhymed verse in two lines with 8 syllables in each, *e.g.*

धर्मरो परम गुह्य । तुमि जगतरो पूज्य ॥
 यार रूप हिये धरि । दुस्तर मृत्युक तरि ॥

(6) *Kusuma-Mālā*—It is a rhymed verse in two lines with six syllables in each, *e.g.*

नमो निरञ्जन । पातक भञ्जन ॥
 गोपीकां रञ्जन । दानव गञ्जन ॥

(7) *Jhujā*—It is composed of rhymed verse with eleven syllables in each, *e.g.*

अरुण लोचन पङ्कज पासि ।
 नुगुळे सदां मुखे अव्य हासि ॥
 दशन पान्ति मुकुतार सारि ।
 प्रलम्ब स्थूल ज्वले भूज चारि ॥

(8) *Hansa-Mālā*—It is a rhymed couplet with eighteen syllables in each, *e.g.*

दिबसे बिषय बियाकुल निशि शयने गोवाह ।
 मने धन खोजि बिमुहित तेरि आरति ना पाह ॥

(9) *Chapaya*—It is written in stanza of four verses having varied syllables from 10 to 12 or more in number, *e.g.*

नयन पङ्कज नब पाता । करतल उतपल राता ॥
 मदनक धनु भ्रुव भङ्ग । भूज युग बलित भूजङ्ग ॥

(10) *Totoya*—It is composed in stanza of 4 verses with 12 syllables in each, beginning with concluding part of the previous one. It is generally a hymn, *e.g.*

फणतोस्मि नतोस्मि नतोस्मि हरिं ।
 हरि बैरी हुताशन भोग्यं हरिं ॥
 हरि किङ्कर शङ्कर ईश पदे ।
 पदमिच्छन् गायनि चामृत दे ॥

RHETORICAL FIGURES USED IN THE COMPOSITION.

Most of the poetical works of Sankaradev are skilfully, artistically and profusely ornamented with rhetorical figures. A brief example of some of the figures is given below :

(1) *Alliteration*—

- (a) भावुक भाई भज भगवन्त भक्ति भावे ।
- (b) कमल केलि कमला कल हंस ।
- (c) दुष्ट दैत्य दानव दलन दीन दरिद्र दुःखभयहारी ।

(2) *Simile*—

- (a) नासा तिल फुल सम प्रकारा ॥
- (b) उरु करिकर सम साक्षात ।
- (c) पूर्ण चन्द्र हूचि मुख मण्डल ।

(3) *Metaphor*—

- (a) परमात्मा शुके जीव नृपत कह्य ।
- (b) भक्ति बारिषा मृतु भैलन्त उदय ।
- (c) बिषये बतासे हास लास ज्ञान हरे ।

4) *Allegory*—

(a) सर्व श्रुति शिरोरत्न भागवत बन माजे
हरि नाम सिंह प्रकाशय ।

तार महा ध्वनि शुनि निज परिवार समे
तर्क व्याघ्री पलाय हुया भय ॥

(b) चन्द्र ज्योति प्रकाशित यिटो मेघगण ।

नजलन्त चन्द्र सेइ मेघे हुइ छन ॥

येन यिटो चैतन्य प्रकाशे अहङ्कार ।

सेइ अहङ्कारे ढाके ज्योति जीवात्मार ॥

SANKARADEVA'S INFLUENCE ON VARIOUS ACTIVITIES.

HIS INFLUENCE ON ART.

Introduction—In presenting his thoughts Sankaradeva shows his mastery in his poems but his interpretation of thoughts exhibits in his drama. The skilfulness fostered in representing the dramas evinced his artistic dexterity. The special features of an artist are fully exhibited in his first drama, Chihnajātrā. Being a religious and pious man his life motion is regulated by spiritual harmony and this spiritual harmony is the main key of an artist. He opened his works with a hymn always. At the beginning of the Chihnjātrā he requested his priest Rām Rām Guru to chant a hymn.

राम राम गुरुक शङ्करे आदेशिला ।

मूल मन्त्र उच्चरिया कृष्णक पूजिला ॥

“Sankaradeva requested Ram Ram Guru to worship Srikrishna chanting the original hymn.”

Uses of brush—Like an artist he uses brush (तुळि) in making back-grounds of sites.” “तुळि हाते लैया बैकुण्ठर पद आंकिला ।”

“He marks the sites of Baikuntha taking a brush.”

Measurement—He measuredly placed the stories of the heaven on the basis of space and time.

येते यिवा लागे समस्तके तुलि दिला ।

एक तिलमानो बैकुण्ठर न छरिला ॥

“He inserted every thing wherever needed without deviating from the real heaven in the slightest.”

Colours—He prepared colours personally to suit their kinds with Hingul, Vermillion (cinnabar) and Harital—Yellow (orpiment).

हिङ्गुल हरिताल तेतिक्षणे आनिलन्त ।

यत्न करि पटे बैकुण्ठक लिखिलन्त ॥

“He brought immediately Hingul and Harital and painted the site of heaven with care.”

He painted pictures and masks keeping classical tradition with befitting colours. Such as he painted Srikrishna with blue-black (Syama); mendicant with white; the violent with red and devils with black.

He trained the actors and dancers as needed for the purpose.

एहिमते पटे येबे नाट लिखिलन्त ।

नटुवा शिखाया येबे साङ्ग करिलन्त ॥

“After finishing the painting of sites he trained dancers.”

Brindābania cloth—In the gorgeous Brindābania cloth of Sankaradeva, his skilfulness in art is fully exhibited. He personally made all designs, figures, paints, colours and manner of interwoven structure of the cloth just as to suit the occasion. In this cloth he illustrated the scene of Krishna-lila from His birth to the death of Kansa. The very illustrations are quite competent to give full comprehensive idea of the life-works of Srikrishna just like cinema of the modern times.

वृन्दबनीया नामे बख्ख आति मनोहर ।

बुवाला प्रबन्धे ताक श्रीमन्त शङ्कर ॥

वृन्दावन मथुरार यत यत लीला ।

करिलन्त पट तात चित्रक तुलिला ॥

“Sri Sankaraveda set people to weave the beautiful Brindābania cloth with care. He prepared himself all the scenes drawing figures of all playful-sports of Srikrishna occurred in Brindābana and Mathura.” Expressional exhibits are more effective than the emotional urges. So Sankaradeva illustrated, as an artist, his thoughts and teachings, through songs, dance, musical instruments, painting, colours and rhythmic bodily movements.

HIS INFLUENCE ON MORALITY.

Non-violence—Sankaradeva advocates non-violence and non-malice. He extends his mercy not only to man but also to animal. His kind behaviour with humility towards his opponents at the time of his trial in the Royal Court of king Naranārayana warrants his non-violent activity. Not to speak of malice rather he prayed for welfare of his opponents by chanting the Bhatima commencing with the line—मधुदानव दारण देववरं

He preaches harmlessness by his own actions. Once upon a time while he was travelling with his disciples and followers, a lamentable cry was heard in a forest. At this Sankaradeva being moved asked his disciples to ascertain its cause. Following the direction of the sound they came up to a trap where a deer was struggling for rescue. At the bidding of Sankaradeva the deer was let loose and Rs. 5/- was left at the foot of the trap-post so as to give some relief to the hunter.

Thus in Sankaradeva's writings, teachings and actions innumerable examples can be traced to show mercy in him.

HIS INFLUENCE UPON NATION.

Introduction—The distinctive feature of a country depends upon her growth of literature and

culture. A course of the Assamese literature and culture has been flowing down from generation to generation from time immemorial. But its real shape and form have been permanently established by the litterateurs of the sixteenth century, among whom Sankaradevâ was the most prominent one. It is his contribution that established a chequered and proud position of Assamese literature and culture, as a nation of separate and distinctive identity of their own in India and abroad.

Culture—The culture of Assam is the Aryan culture mingled with climatic influences of the land. The references of Prāgyotisha with its king Narakāsura and Bhagadatta in the Rāmāyana and in the Mahābhārata and their relationship with all India-renowned personalities evinced that the land of Assam was fully influenced with the Aryan culture. The anecdotes of Rukmini-Haran, Ushā-Haran, Parasurām-kunda, Vashisthāsrama and the like advocate the existence of special activities of Aryans in Assam. From the records of Hiuen Tsang, the renowned Chinese traveller, it can be traced out that Assam maintained and sustained a distinctive feature of its own during the reign of Bhaskara Barma. After this in the sixteenth century this decisive distinction of Assam has achieved its zenith through various channels of

which the Vaisnava literature was the main. All the literature of that century established the characteristics of Assam such as mode of living, habits, customs, society, spiritual uplifts, mental and moral dispositions and what-not. Hence it can safely be said that the cultural aspects of Assam owe much to the Vaisnava literature radiating from Sankaradeva.

Literature—Along with the Aryan culture the Assamese literature commences to flow into many-folded courses. From the records of Huen Tsang, it can be said that during the prehistoric times very few books have been compiled, such as —Dakara-Bachana by Daka (this Dakara-Bachana may be called first versified work in Assamese), Dipika-chanda by Purusottama Gajapati; Mahabharata (Aswamedha parba) by Harihar Bipra; Prohlada-charit by Hem Saraswati; Behula by Durga Bara; Sukanamni by Narayanadeva (this is the first book dealing with the story of Behula and Lakhindar); and Rāmāyana by Mādhava Kandali. This period may be called the "First period" of Assamese literature.

After this period the Vaisnavite literature comes. It lasted from the middle of the fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century. During this period a great number of scriptures

have been compiled and composed and the detailed account of those scriptures has been enumerated and illustrated under the head of "Writing of Sankaradeva" in this treatise. The full dispositions of the Assamese literary culture have been fully dealt in these scriptures. This period of Assamese literature may be called the "Sankari period". And this Sankari period is the renaissance period of Assam.

HIS UNIVERSALISM.

Sankaradeva's writings and teachings are all embracing and all-entertaining. His extensive literature, his well organised social order and his well thought religious faith reveal the ideas and thoughts, true to all people of all ages.

Universalism in literature—The following few passages quoted from his scriptures show the universalism in his literature :

- (1) तुमि परमह्मा जगतर ईश एक ।
 एको बस्तु नाहिके तोमात व्यतिरेके ॥
 तुमि कार्य्य कारण समस्त चराचर ॥
 सुवर्ण कुण्डले येन नाहिके अन्तर ॥

"Thou art the only Supreme Soul of all the world.
 There is nothing but Thee. Thou art the cause

and the deed of all as there exists no distinction between gold and ear-rings."

(2) असत्यत परे पाप, नाहि जाना बाप ।

"Know it certainly that there is no greater sin than falsehood."

(3) विनिजो लोकत यत आछे धान्यधन ।

यत दिव्य नारी आछे सुन्दरी प्रधान ॥

यत दिव्य घर बारी बख अलङ्कार ।

सबेओ नुपरे मन जाना लुभीयार ॥

"All the wealth of the three worlds, all the most beautiful women, all the bright buildings, ornaments, and clothes can never satisfy the heart of the covetous."

(4) मने पाप मने पुण्य मनेसे नरक ।

मनेसे करिछे भेद आपोन परक ॥

"Mind makes the vice and virtue; mind makes the heaven and the hell; mind makes the friend and foe."

(5) यत देखा भार्य्या पुत्र सबे अकारण ।

मिछा मोर मोर करि मरे नरगण ॥

"Whatever you see, wife and son are meaningless. People call them of their own for nothing."

(6) राम मेरि हृदय पङ्कजे रैछे ।

भाइ चित्त ! ना चिन्तस कैछे ।

“Ram the Lord is in my lotus heart, why not think of Him, Oh mind?”

All embracing Social Organisation—Sankaradeva's social organisation is based on the principle of embracing one and all. In his religious association there exists no caste system nor untouchability. His temple of prayer is open to all. All classes of people under his society can enjoy the privileges of equal status. Without considering any distinction whatsoever he bestowed his faith to persons who were earnest and eager in following his teachings.

In one place Sankaradeva says :

कुकुर चण्डाल गर्दभरो आत्मा राम ।

जानिया सबाको परि करिवा प्रणाम ॥

“Rāma the Lord is the soul of Dogs, Chandals, and asses ; realising this pay your homage to all.”

Thus Sankaradeva preaches Samyabada—the doctrine of Equality.

All embracing religion—Sankaradeva's religious faith is the faith of all. His religion creates obstacle to none. His God, the object of worship is Omni-present, Omni-scient, Omni-fic, Omni-

merciful, Eternal, Everlasting and ever perpetual.
He says :

नमो नमो भगवन्त पूर्ण सनातन ।
अन्तर्यामी जीवर नियन्ता नारायण ॥
विविध कल्पना माया नोद्धोवे याहाक ।
परम ईश्वर करो प्रणाम तोमाक ॥

“Oh God ! Thou art the Ever-Eternal, the knower of hearts, guide of all creatures, the Supreme Being, I pray Thee. The illusion full of various speculations cannot touch Thee. Thou art the Supreme Lord of All; I pray Thee.”

परम ब्रह्म आत्मा यिटो नित्य निरञ्जन ।
याहार प्रकाशे प्रकाशय चराचर ॥

“(I pray Thee) the Supreme Soul of souls, Eternal unstained, at whose manifestation the universe is manifested.”

नमो नमो नारायण अनन्त अनादि ।
जगत कारण निरञ्जन सत्यवादी ॥
यार माया पाशे इटो संसार निर्माण ।
त्राहि त्राहि हरि महापुरुष पुराण ॥

“Oh Eternal, Unlimited, cause of the creation, stainless, and truthful Lord Nārāyaṇa, I pray Thee. Thou from whose net of fascination this

universe has been created and who is eternal great Lord Hari, savest me.”

जानिलो साक्षाते तुमि पुरुष पुराण ।

निरञ्जन आनन्द स्वरूप सर्व्वजान ॥

तुमिसे केवले सँचा सबे मायामय ।

तोमातेसे हन्ते सृष्टि होवे स्थिति लय ॥

“I know Thou art God eternal one, unstained, delightful, and omniscient. Thou art the reality and the rest are delusions only. Thou art the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world (I pay my homage to Thee).”

Regarding the process of achieving his faith he says :

भाइ, मुखे बोला राम हृदये धरा रूप ।

एतेके मुकुति पाइबा कहिलो स्वरूप ॥

“Oh brother! Chant Rama Nāma at mouth; meditate upon His form at heart; and thereby you will achieve salvation; I say truly.”

कर्णे कथा मने रूप, मुखे तयु नाम ।

“Let there be in my ear Thy discourse; in my mind Thy form; and in my mouth Thy Nāma.”

Universal type of prayer—In the following Psalm Mādhavadeva provides the pure form of prayer in achieving the faith of his preceptor

Sankaraveda which can be chanted by any people of any creed and caste.

तुमि चित्त बृत्ति मोर प्रवर्त्तक नारायण

तुमि नाथ मइ नाथवन्त ।

चरण छत्रर छाया दिया दूर करा माया

करा दया मोक भगवन्त ॥

तुमि मोर अन्तर्यामी तयु भृत्य भैलो आमि

जानि कृपा करा हृषीकेश ।

दान्ते तृण तुलि लओँ यिमते सेवात रओँ

दिया मोक सेहि उपदेश ॥

मोर सम पांपी लोक नाहिके इ तिनि लोक

तुमि सम नाहि पाप हारी ।

इजानि गोविन्द मोक येन युवाइ करियोक

तुवा पदे करोहो गोहारि ॥

सहस्र सहस्र आति अपराध दिने राति

करो मइ महामूढ जन ।

आमि प्रभु तयु दास आके मणि जग बास

क्षमियोक श्रीमधुसुदन ॥

धर्मक जानोहो मइ तथापि प्रवृत्ति नाइ

अधर्मतो निवृत्ति नोहय ।

हृदि स्थिति हुया तुमि येन कराबाह, स्वामी

हृषीकेश करिबो तेनय ॥

नाजानोहो आवाहन नाजानोहो बिसर्जन
 पूजा मन्त्र नाजानो किञ्चित् ।
 एतेके परमेश्वर दास भैलो चरणर
 मोर गति साधिबे उचित ॥

Gist of the above prayer :

"Thou guidest, Oh Lord, the inner workings of my heart. In Thee I am possessed of a Lord. Remove my delusion by offering me protection under Thy feet; be kind unto me, Oh Lord. Thou art the inner controller of my soul; I have turned a servant unto Thee; know this and be kind. I take up a straw within my teeth and bow unto Thee; show me how I may remain in Thy service. A sinner like me in the three worlds, there is none, like Thee too there is none, who purgest sins. Know Thou this, Oh Govinda, and do unto me as Thou thinkest fit. This is my prayer at Thy feet. Thousands of sins day and night I commit, being wrapt in delusion. Know me as Thy slave, Thou container of the world, and forgive, I know what is righteousness, still I do not stick to it; from unrighteousness, I do not keep away. I do as dwelling in my heart, Thou biddest me do. I know not how to worship Thee nor how to make Thee propitiated. I know naught

of invocation or prayer. Hence, Oh Lord, I fall a servant at Thy feet, Mayest Thou steer my course."

EXHORTATIONS OF SANKARADEVA.

At the end of a poem or a chapter of any composition of Sankaradeva an exhortation is found indicating and revealing his idea, instructions and advice. Some of the exhortations are quoted below for illustration :

कृष्णर किङ्करे भणे शङ्करे सम्प्रति ।

बोला हंरि हरि पाप याओक अधोगति ॥

"Sankaradeva the servant of Krishna says, 'Chant the nāma of Hari and thereby let all sins be dispelled.'"

कहे कृष्ण किङ्करे शङ्करे । नेरिबा कीर्त्तन एको नरे ॥

आजि कालि मिलिबे मरण । हरि हरि बोला सब्बजन ॥

"Sankara the servant of Krishna says, Nobody should give up chanting of Nāma. Oh people chant Hari Hari; death may come to-day or to-morrow."

जाणि धरा कृष्ण पावे

एरायो झमेर घरे

मुखत नेरिबा हरि नाम ।

केने आळा बाट चाइ इटो आयु व्यर्थयाय
निरन्तरे बोला राम राम ॥

“Knowing all fasten yourself at the feet of Krishna and leave death's abode; never leave Nāma of Hari from your mouth, Why are you waiting for? Duration of life is passing away for nothing, chant the nāma of Rama incessantly.”

एभो नसम्पजे मति कलित नामेसे गति
हेन जानि एरा आन काम ।
केने आपोनाक बधा अक्षय पुण्यक सत्त्वा
डाकि सवे बोला राम राम ॥

“If your attention does not strike to these, know that chanting of Nāma is the only security of Iron Age, hence keep aside all other things. Why do you perish yourself? Earn eternal virtue; chant all of you Ram Ram.”

महाधर्म शिरोमणि कृष्णर चरित ।
भवरोग बिनाशन परम अमृत ।
कर्ण भरि पिया करा दुःख उपशम ।
पापर निर्मूल होक बोला राम राम ।

“Character of Srikrishna is the great virtue like the jewel of the head. It is destroyer of the

worldly sick and it is full of nectar. Listen to it with full attention and relieve yourself from sorrow. Chant Rām Rām and uproot the sin."

नामत समस्ते आछे युग धर्म पाय ।

बोला राम राम हेरा व्यर्थ आयु याय ॥

"Approaching the spirit of times all the virtue rests in chanting of Nāma. Time is whiling away, say Ram Ram."

आवे बहुजन, एरा आन मन ।

यावत चेतन, भजा नारायण ॥

"Oh wise people ! keep aside all other things, only worship Nārāyana as long as you are in sense."

कृष्णर किङ्कर शङ्कर कहु बिछुरि विषय काम ।

राम चरण लेहु शरण जप गोविन्दकु नाम ॥

"Sankara the servant of Krishna says "Leaving away all the worldly affairs take refuge at the feet of Nāma and meditate upon Nāma of Govinda."

ओहि परम तत्त्व

बेदके बाणी

जानि नर नकर बिराम ।

धर्मक करमक

गरबक छोरि

डाकि बोलहु राम राम॥

“This is the supreme truth and message of Vedas, knowing it Oh man! never waste away time, keeping aside all rites, deeds, and pride utter loudly Rāma Rāma.”

कृष्णर किङ्कर

भणिल बङ्कर

हरि पावे करा रति ।

शुना सर्व्वज

एरा आन मन

धूषियो हरि सम्प्रति ॥

“Sankara the servant of Srikrishna writes, Lay your love at the feet of Hari. Listen Oh people! chant the Nāma of Hari only and, give up all the rest.”

CONCLUSION.

The study of Sankaradeva is a very large and extensive subject. It is not possible to do full justice to it in this small treatise. It is a glory to Assam to have a Reformer in every respect in a personage like Sankaradeva in whom the whole of Assamese culture may be said to be epitomised.

Sankaradeva is the upholder of Sāmyabada, the doctrine of Equality. His religion is based on the principles of eternity and perpetuality, the type for which the present India is crying. The type of Śanātana Dharma has been generated and

fostered in Assam by Sankaradeva from times long past.

The subject matter of Sankaradeva's literature is a combination of religious philosophy and human psychology. Nature with all her charms and beauties is depicted in his literature showing mutual affinity and relation between phenomenon aspects and human passions, emotions and conceptions. The Aryan culture and mysticism subsisting between God and man are extolled in his works. His literature is a combination of profoundness of thought and clearness of expression. The cult of Bhāgavata Dharma with the conception of Oneness of God has been revealed in his works in the form of Mahāpuruṣīya Dharma.

Thorough reformation and organisation of the society and moral binding of Assam, have been achieved through his Satra-System activity. The social order and tone established by his influence is traditionally coming down from generation to generation.

In his teachings we find the essence of all religion. The sayings of Hindu scriptures—“आत्मवत् सर्वभूतेषु”—the sayings of Christian scriptures—“Love Thy neighbour as thyself”. The sayings of Bouddha scriptures—“बहुजन हिताय, * * all of them found room in his teachings. The

principle of “अहिंसा परमो धर्मः” adopted and accepted by all religions of the world is deeply rooted in the teachings of Sankaradeva. The broadness of his teachings makes a common platform for all humanity. His broadmindedness can easily be appreciated by the following verses in a nut-shell :

सकल प्राणीक देखिबेक आत्मा सम ।

उपाय मध्यत इटो अति मुख्यतम ॥

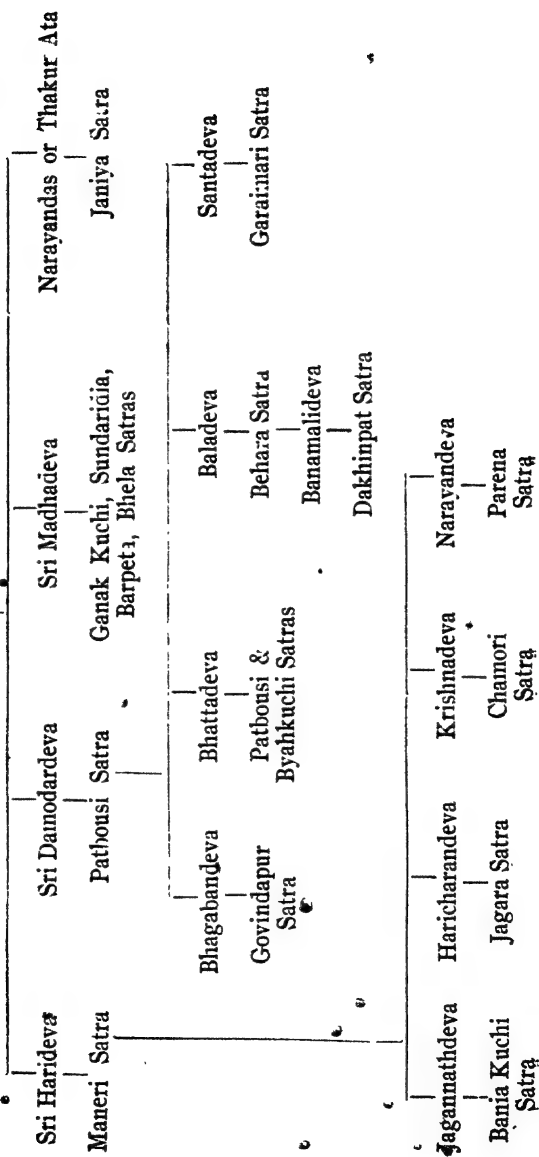
“The best way of practising virtue is to love all creatures as your own self.”

The more we enter into the activities of Sankaradeva the more we find in him a great author, a profound scholar, an uncommon philosopher, an initiatory reformer, a well ordered social organiser, an artist of good order, a true nation builder, and at last a true patriot identifying himself with the cause of the nation and humanity.

LIST OF THE SATRAS AND ACHARYAS

SATRAS WHICH WERE ESTABLISHED AS A RESULT OF THE PREACHING OF SANKARADEVA AND HIS APOSTLES

Acharyyas and Satras established by Sri Sankaradeva



Twelve Acharyyas and Satras established by Madhavadeva

1 Rancharan Thakur (Nephew)	2 Mathuradas or Burha Ata	3 Chamariya Satra	4 Keshab Charan or Bhato Kuchiya Ata	5 Parhia Madhava Atai	6 Lakshmi Kanta Atai	7 Lochakania Govinda Atai
Sundaridiya Satra	Barpeta Satra		Barjaha Satra	Herandai Satra	Dhoparguri Satra	Khatara Satra
8 Bhabanipuria Gopal Ata	9 Ransigpal or Devapal (Brahman)	10 Jadumani (Brahman)	11 Sri Hari (Brahman)	12 Padma Ata or Badula Ata		Chief Bhaktas
	Deberapār Satra	Adhar, Mahara, Gharmara & Patiyari Satras	Laiati Satra	Kanala Bari Satra	Sri RamAta	Harihar Ata
						Majetiya Satra

Bar Bara Janiya established by Purusottam, the grandson of Saukaradeva

1 Keshab Charan (Brahman)	2 Gopinath or Govinda (Brahman)	3 Basudeva (Brahman)	4 Rankrishna or Krishna (Brahman)	5 Paraniananda Bhagavati (Brahman)	6 Parasuram (Brahman)
Kaochang Satra	Chekeratali Satra	Chamatiya Satra	Gomotha Satra	Ratanpur Satra	Puniar Phulbari Satra
7 Srikrishna or Bapukrishna	8 Hari Charan	9 Kamal Lochan	10 Murari	11 Krishna Charan	12 Kamal Lochan
Alengi Satra	Saokuchi Satra	Kathpar Satra	Bengana Ati Satra	Chupaha Satra	Thakarnal Satra

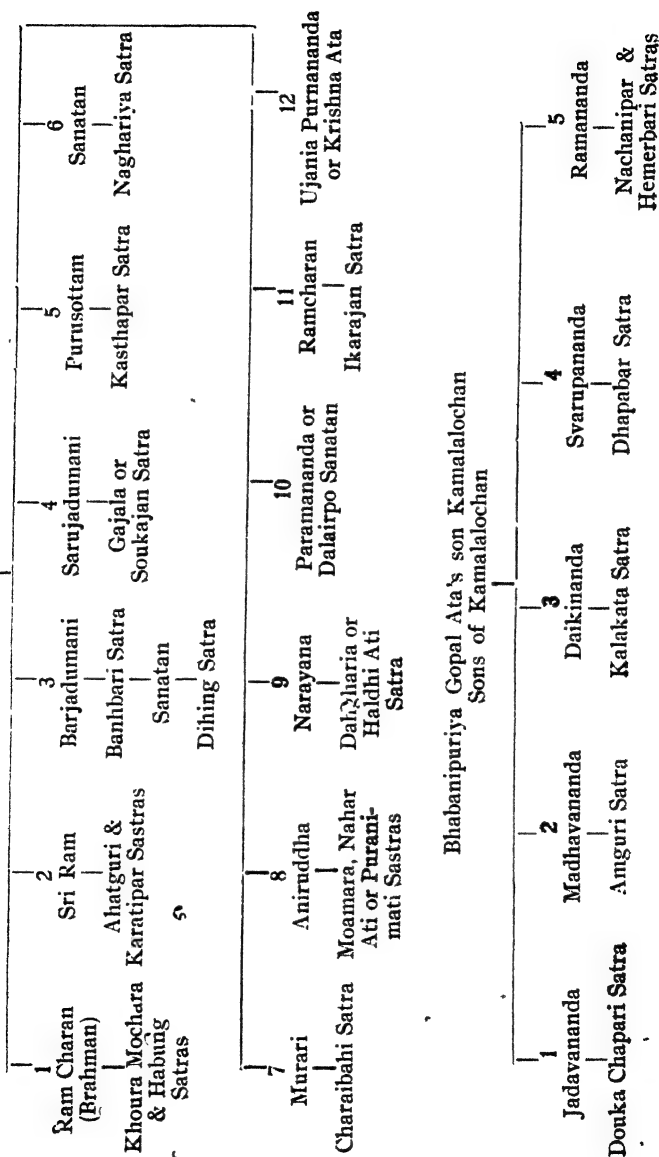
Saru Bara Janiya established by Chaturbhuj Thakur, the grandson of Sankaradeva

1	2	3	4	5	6
Deoram	Jay Krishna	Jay Kanai	Gopirath	Mnkunda	Ratnakar
Bargaon Satra	Kherkataia Satra	Govir Satra	Kawainuari Satra	Haladi Ati Satra	Silguri Satra
7	8	9	10	11	12
Govinda (Brahman)	Ram Bhadra (Brahman)	Vishnudev (Brahman)	Kanai (Brahman)	Kanai	Sanatan
Bihampur Satra	Nachanipar Satra	Bhandulai Satra	Chungapar Satra	Ujaniya Satra	Belsiriya Satra

Satras issued from Bansigopaldeva

1	2	3	4	5
Misradeva	Jaiharideva	Niranjandeva	Lakshmiadeva	Arjundeve
Kuruwahabi Satra	Garmur Satra	Auni Ati Satra	Debera Satra	Nachapari Satra
6	7	8	9	10
Ramchandra	Krishna Chandra	Gatikanta	Hari	Damodar
Kuruwabahi	Diphul Satra	Srivali Satra	Parpukhuriya Satra	Jakhalabandha Satra

Twelve Acharyyas and Satras established by Bhabanipuriya Gopal Ata



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